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SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1, Dead March; 6, Homer; 9, Plastic; 10, Prosaic; 11, Lymphatic; 13, Epic; 15, Squatter; 17, Caste; 19, Phase; 20, Onlooker; 22, Nail; 23, Satellite; 26, Trident; 28, Acetate; 29, Resin; 30, Nodulated.

DOWN: 1, Dapple; 2, Alarm; 3, Match maker; 4, Recitations; 5, Hip; 6, Hood; 7, Meat paste; 8, Ricochet; 12, Coral strand; 14, School bell; 16, Qualities; 18, Spinster; 21, Depend; 24, Inapt; 25, Bean; 27, Tan.

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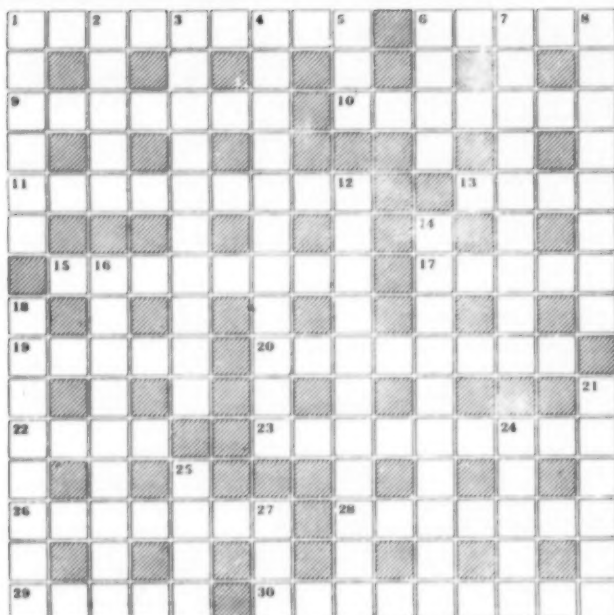
F 1

CHAMBERS'S DICTIONARY

CROSSWORD No. 10

ACROSS

- 1 She comes out indoors (9).
- 6 Flour and water jewels? (5).
- 9 If you are this, this is what you have. Dry up! (7).
- 10 This is awkward (7).
- 11 Unruly, as Becket was said to be (9).
- 13 If the shilling were replaced by a penny, it would still be half (4).
- 15 Unmusical quavers (8).
- 17 Porcelain—not necessarily oriental (5).
- 19 Cover round an ancient city—how ghastly! (5).
- 20 Mostly sharp, wholly unnecessary (8).
- 22 Carry—on the race course? (4).
- 23 Alone in the ring (9).
- 26 It's unique (7).
- 28 Sounds like a headdress, but goes round when steam driven (7).
- 29 Pithy—like the *Sunday* print (5).
- 30 Mixed Ludo in mother for regulator (9).



Composed by JOAN BENYON

15

DOWN

- 1 A lack which is mostly extinction (6).
- 2 Province of Bengal (5).
- 3 He tortured long ago with questions, and more recently with Crosswords (10).
- 4 Catch her countries—no high terrain here! (11).
- 5 Get the bird down under (3).
- 6 Chase the implement (4).
- 7 These for remembrance (9).
- 8 Racial, and mostly of moral significance (8).

DOWN (contd.)

- 12 One might have a chequered career on floors so paved (11).
- 14 Engrave on mountain range, as carved (10).
- 16 Land of Hope (9).
- 18 As good as gold? No, better! (8).
- 21 Turn round direction for a thin cut (6).
- 24 Don't you, you clump! (5).
- 25 She shouldn't lack punch (4).
- 27 Noah = 29 across son (3).

Three prizes of books from Chambers's catalogue to the value of ten shillings and sixpence each will be awarded to the senders of the first correct solutions opened.

Entries must arrive not later than the 15th February.

Envelopes should be clearly marked CROSSWORD in the top left-hand corner.

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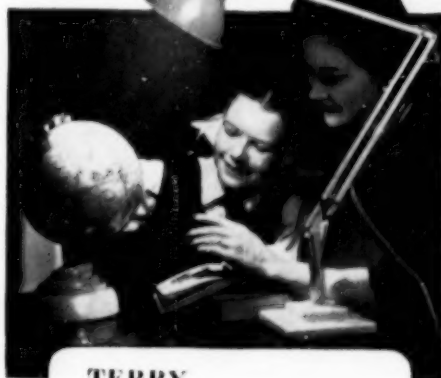
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My Brother Florence

N. M. ROBERTS

THE little girl going to the Feis boarded the train with her mother two stations down the line. She had on a white serge coat and a white beret set straight on her head with a spirit-level, red bows in her hair, steel buckles on her shoes, and a black rexine music-case under her arm. Her face was plain, like a soda-cake, round and bland and blank, with her eyes two smaller rounds in it, calm as washed pebbles. Her mother planted her squarely in the middle of the seat opposite, with her back to the engine, her feet crossed at the ankles, her hands lying slack in her lap to conserve their strength for the pianoforte test, then turned with an impresario's gesture to the rest of us. 'She's in for the under twelves,' she explained. 'Sister Philomena says 'tis years since she's had a child like her for the sight-reading.'

'She'll be at the convent, then?' asked the girl in the corner. 'Sister Philomena was my teacher. I only left two year ago.' You would have thought it longer. The girl was smart, with nylons and sling-back shoes and clever make-up: only the frizzy perm and the silly, pretty necklace of blue shells prepared you for the breadth of her accent.

'And she's my own first cousin, my mother's eldest brother's child,' said the big woman opposite. She had got in at the start of the journey. There were three labourers with her, their trouser bottoms hanging in theatrical fringes, as if somebody had hacked them with nail-scissors, and she had talked with them, jolly like an aunt for all her good clothes, calling: 'God bless you, boys!' when they got out. 'The dark lad is our ploughman, and his father before him, and his grandfather before that,' she explained. Then she turned to the window to watch the fields flowing past, keen as a land-agent, taking in the worth of every acre. 'I could tell you some tales about Philomena when we were girls together. She didn't make up her mind to go into the Order till she was twenty-five, and a proper lad she was!'

'It's those ones always make the best nuns in the end,' said the little girl's mother. She was a fairish woman, who looked as if her feet hurt her. 'Then if Sister Philomena's own cousin to you, you'll be John Joe Cleary's daughter.'

'His only daughter,' said the big woman. 'But I don't remember you at all. Are you

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by any chance from Ennis that you knew my Da?"

'Twas not him I knew,' said the child's mother. 'It was your brother Florence I used to be meeting at the O'Riordans. Our boys were friends there, and in the Troubles I was in and out carrying messages.'

'Ah, that was a grand house for a refuge,' said the big woman. 'It's but six years since old Mrs O'Riordan died. She was a lovely woman, Mrs O'Riordan.'

'Rest her soul!' crooned the little girl's mother. 'I remember her, with her gorgeous wine silk blouse, and a cameo, and her fine poll of white hair and her wonderful beaming eyes. And there was nothing she would fear. As there was one night the soldiers came, and she as calm as a queen talking to them, with two of the boys they were after lying under the dry grass in the ditch behind the house. Diarmuid Connor and her own Barney it was. And to think Barney died before her, and he the fine strapping lad he was.'

'Ah, he was never right after he came out of Mountjoy,' said the big woman. 'And Diarmuid has had a weakness in his chest all his life since the time he was on the run. He went to the dispensing, and he's in Thurles now, but if you saw him you'd think his death wasn't far from him.'

'Ah, bless us and save us, they earned their country,' sighed the little girl's mother. 'They earned their country.'

'They did that,' said the big woman. 'The things I've seen in my lifetime. And it was the best that went. Do you mind Mrs Hanrahan, her whose husband was taken with the pleurisy? She had one curly-haired laddie, a tall, fine boy. The Black and Tans came one day, raging with the brandy they'd drunk at Casey's, and dragged him out. I watched his mother gather up his brains into her black widow's apron. Yes, we've looked on some sights in our lifetime.'

'Oh, Sacred Heart of Jesus!' moaned the child's mother. The train was speeding up, rocking from side to side, and the woman swayed her body to the motion as if she was keening. The child laid the music-case on the seat beside her, took a caramel from her pocket and unwrapped it, then used the purple tinfoil to make a cocked hat for a pixie while she chewed gravely. The girl with the blue necklace was stuck in a woman's magazine. 'Why not serve Honeycomb Haycocks, dainty and festive, and so simple for your next party?'

you could read between the second and third fingers of the hand that held it up.

THE child's mother suddenly started talking again, low and fierce. 'My Da was a fine, big man, with a burd, a brown, pointed burd like King Edward the Seventh. And in our kitchen we had a coloured picture of King Edward the Seventh that came from the Mellin's Food hung up. If he was an Englishman, still he was a grand man to look at, a lovely man, and the spit and image of my Da, so that my mother said it was as good as having him in the room with her all the day. There was one night the Black and Tans came. The both of the Walsh boys was on the run, and they were looking for them through the village, and the soldiers came storming to our house with our mother away from home. They went through everything and found nobody, and when the officer had come out from the bedroom he stood before the picture of King Edward the Seventh. "That's a fine picture to see in a rebel household," he said. "You think to curry favour, do you?" And I stood up to him with no fear at all and I said: "Excuse me, but we keep that picture there because it is the living image of my Da. I don't care if he was the King of England." And I showed him my Da's photograph, side by side with it. And the officer said: "That for a tale!" and he spoke to one of his men, and the man slashed his bayonet across the picture. 'Twas men like that they were. His own king. A week later that officer was killed. Three of the boys held up his car when he was driving by the coast road, and said quiet like: "Will you step outside, please," and shot him and left him lying there. They never touched a hair of the driver.'

'It was only the ones that deserved it that our boys laid hands on,' said the big woman. 'And they gave warning first. One time they sent a new officer to the West, and he had made it known in all the papers before he came that he intended to quiet the country, and he gave it out to his men not to hold their hands against those who were ready to murder them. He was sent a note telling him that there was orders to shoot him. It was not a night ambush. Some even then were friendly to the soldiers. There was the Consindes—they traded with them, and the two daughters were with the officers all the time at the golf and the tennis. It was the eldest one was with

MY BROTHER FLORENCE

him when they shot the gallant major on the golf links at Tralee.'

THE miles of bog unrolled like a drugget, olive-brown and endless; the blue above it brimmed the huge field of the sky and overflowed into the carriage windows so that the faces it lapped seemed afloat in a clear ocean of light, pure and tender and stainless.

The girl in the corner was dozing, her head slithered sideways, her mouth agape to reveal a bad tooth, the collar of her blouse fallen open to show a blue shoulder-strap, not clean. The child made an end of chewing and laid her music-case flat across her knees again. On it, as on a dumb keyboard, she began to practise scales in contrary motion, passing her thumbs deftly under the third fingers on what would be the F and the G, her eyes all the while never shifting from their bolting, forward stare.

'Where is your brother Florence now?' asked her mother of the big woman. 'He was studying strong to be a priest before the Troubles, I mind. He will be in his own parish these many years, for sure.'

The big woman was looking out of the window again, draining and planting the bog in her mind, it might be, or reckoning the value of the turf. You would have said she had not heard the child's mother, sitting bent forward a little, her face shaped into a question. When she turned she spoke softly. 'Florence did not go on for the priesthood. He was not able for it, he said, after he came out of Mountjoy. He took to the doctoring instead.'

'God's curse on them!' cried the child's mother. 'God's curse on them that they could not rest content with spoiling the health of our lads and the peace of our homes, but they must be after destroying a vocation as well. But I did not know that Florence had been in Mountjoy. It was not the same time as my own brother, or I would have heard.'

'They caught him when he had been on the run for close on a year,' said the big woman. 'It was a month before Christmas—I have never forgotten that year. There was the five of us at home, the four boys and I, the third child, between Marty and Florence and Kevin and Daniel. I remember always the gladness of my mother after Danny was born. "Four sons to my coffin!" she would say. "Four sons to my coffin, one to a corner."

She was a very merry woman, was my mother, and that Christmas was the only time for me to see her in tears. She had heard then that Florence was in Mountjoy, and Marty and Kevin had been on the run for months. My little brother she had sent away to my auntie to stay, that he might be out of danger, for they were killing children, too. We knew only long afterwards that he had been carrying messages for our fellows, and he not thirteen years old then. That Christmas there were but the three of us at home, and when we came to light the Christmas candle it should be the oldest and the youngest, and where it was to have been my little brother with my father there was only myself. And as the wick caught, and the flame jumping in the wind from the door, my mother broke out crying and sobbing: "Four sons to my coffin, I was after saying, and not one of them beneath my roof this night!"'

'Blessed Mary, help us!' murmured the child's mother. 'That such sorrow should come to a good woman and a decent household.'

'My mother went to Dublin after that Christmas,' the big woman went on. 'Every morning they posted outside Mountjoy the names of those to be executed that day, and every morning their relatives would stand there in the mud to read the names, for they had no other way of knowing the fate of their sons and their husbands and their brothers. There was a woman in a grey shawl that came from Galway, and had walked the breadth of the country to be near her boy and know his end. She could neither read nor write, and every morning when the list of names was posted up she would say to my mother: "Would you tell me, madam, is the name Phelan among those names?" And every morning my mother would say: "No, thanks be to God, the name Phelan is not among them," until one day it was there. My mother has told me she had almost rather have read the name of Florence among those who were meeting their deaths than have had to tell the woman in the grey shawl that her son's name was among them.'

'AND Florence, then?' the child's mother persisted.

'Florence had good fortune,' said the big woman. 'You will mind that after the German war there were many young English-

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

men out of the army who came here to the university, and one of them was a friend of Florence's before the Troubles began. English as he was, he was a good friend, for Flurry was injured and ill in Mountjoy, and there is never a doubt that he would have died there if this young man, whose father was in the English Parliament, had not been able to have him moved into hospital. He was there while the executions were raging, and they cured him, and, though he had to go back to Mountjoy and he was as weak as a child when he was released, he was right enough after he had been nourished up at home a while.

'Ah, God forgive them, he was shot when they captured him then,' said the little girl's mother. 'Thanks be to Our Lady for preservin' him.'

'He was not shot,' said the big woman. 'The Black and Tans had no need of shooting when they captured Flurry. There was eight of them in company together, and he alone. They threw him to the ground and beat him with the butts of their rifles, and the while he was lying there helpless one of the soldiers in his great boots kicked him in the soft belly, and then he stood on him. 'Twas his damaged inside that needed treatment in the hospital. Florence told me that while he was lying on the ground screaming with pain the one thing he had clear in his sight was the face of the soldier who was kicking him, and abusing him, grinning and saying: "That for you, you Irish swine!" while his iron feet were crashing against Flurry's vital organs. Florence said that all the time one part of his mind was still and quiet, and he was gazing at the soldier's features and saying: "Before God, I will remember you till the day I die, and if I meet you while I have an arm out of the grave I will have my revenge on you for this."'

'May the blessed saints be his help,' murmured the child's mother. 'Indeed, there is many a year in which he may have the fortune to meet him. Florence is a young man yet.'

The big woman was looking out of the window again. The train was getting to the end of the bog now. There were small fields beside the line, with the black-and-white cattle grazing, a flotilla of geese breasting across the green in full sail, a black mare streaking away from the racket of the engine, with the wind combing her tail out. The train was running smoothly; in the carriage you could hear the thick sound of the sleeping

girl's breathing, and the paper crackling when the child felt in her pocket for another sweet.

'Look at them rabbits there!' her mother cried to her suddenly. The round eyes swivelled and came back into the straight: impossible to tell if they had glimpsed the vanishing scuts or not.

The big woman looked in again too. 'Florence has met him,' she said.

'Ah, glory be to God, so he had his vengeance!' exulted the child's mother. 'And what form at all did it take?'

'It was more than fifteen years afterwards,' said the big woman. 'When Florence felt he could not go on with the priesthood he turned to the doctoring. He was always a clever boy, though I am his sister that says it, and he went through all his examinations the first time, flying. He was for a while assistant to a doctor in Waterford, then he took a practice in England, in one of the big towns in the North.'

'To think he should be there curing them after all they had done to him and his countrymen,' said the child's mother. 'Tis a Christian man he is, even if his vocation failed him. Has he prospered at all among them?'

'He did that,' said the big woman. 'Florence was always one for studying. He would spend his holidays visiting hospitals abroad, and learning of new remedies, and he came soon to be known and respected among all the doctors in the district.'

'And it was in one of the voyages he made abroad that he met the Black and Tan?' asked the child's mother.

'It was in his own surgery,' said the big woman. 'He had finished with his patients one night, and it was late getting when there came a man ringing and saying to the housekeeper that he must see the doctor, however late it might be. It was not one of his own patients, his housekeeper told him, but the man seemed distraught about his son that was ill. Flurry knew him in a minute, but the Black and Tan did not know Flurry. He had been but a young lad when last they met, of course. His boy, twelve years old, was ill and delirious, he said, and they could not get any doctor to come at that hour of the night. He would give Florence every penny he could call his own, would he only come.'

'And so the good Lord put him into your brother's hands?' The child's mother was

MY BROTHER FLORENCE

triumphant. 'All there was for him to do was to make himself known, and make known that all the riches in New York City would not buy his services for one that had nigh murdered him. The Black and Tan would turn sorrowfully away into the night and your brother would be left to enjoy the vengeance that was his reward!'

'Yes, Florence used to say that it was the good God that sent him,' the big woman remembered. 'The young boy was far gone in his fever Florence could see the moment he came into the room. That summer he had been in Germany studying, and had brought back with him a new serum. He employed it on the child, and was many days attending on him, and it was reckoned a wonderful cure. The father was for rewarding him with anything he might ask, but Florence wanted nothing but the fees he would have asked for any other.'

'And 'twas in that moment he made himself known?' breathed the child's mother.

'Florence never made himself known,' said the big woman. 'He had done his duty, he said, and he had no wish to be triumphing over the man. The moment he saw the boy lying on the bed there, he told me, all the desire for vengeance left him. He said it was as if Our Blessed Lady herself had laid her hand on his heart and calmed it.'

'Tis among the saints in glory he will be,' declared the child's mother. 'And he will be rewarded yet in this life, you mark what I tell you.'

ON either side of the tracks the sluttish skirts of a market-town were appearing. As if they had brushed against her, the girl in the corner stirred and opened her eyes. Before she was fairly awake she began smoothing her dress and patting her hair, her hands shaping

automatically to the familiar movements. The big woman watched her dragging a blue comb through the curls that were as dry as bracken, before she spoke again. 'Florence is dead.'

'Oh, Sacred Heart!' The child's mother shrieked. 'Twas the effect of his old injury and he after benefiting his enemy in that fashion, like our dear Lord himself.'

'No,' said the big woman, 'it was not his old injury. It was the pneumonia. One of the winters of the war the influenza was raging through the town and Florence was rushed off his feet night and day. Late one evening he came home himself shivering with it and hardly able to speak. He was going to bed while his housekeeper was making him a hot drink—Florence had never married—when there came a call from the parish priest, who was down with it. He could not refuse the Canon, he said, and he went on in his seventies, and he went. He was scarcely back from the presbytery when there was another call, this time from a widow woman with a string of children that was among his patients. It was the youngest little girl that was very bad, she said. His housekeeper would have barred the door against his leaving the house again to go out into the cold of the night, and him looking the way he did, but he said to her: "What will they be thinking of me in the town if they hear I went to the Canon and refused poor Mrs Flavin?" He came back to bed, and in three days he was dead. There were no serums to do him any good.'

She stood to straighten her hat in the glass opposite as the train grunted to a standstill at the platform. 'My brother Florence was a very gentle man. He was like a priest, I always said, even if he did not go on with it. God bless you all now, and good fortune to the child in the music.'

March First Story: *Straw in the Wind* by Jim Phelan.

Spring Herald

Oh, bird, too soon, too sweet your song,
That lilting, fluting note, too gay;
Yet falls night early, cold and long,
Yet faintly gleams each flickering day.

Perched in that gaunt and leafless tree,
My joyous Johnnie-Head-in-Air,
Who taught you that wild ecstasy,
Who told you: Spring shall be so fair?

M. G. HULL.

A Mayfair Bluestocking

Lydia White and Her Salon

W. M. PARKER

IF an examination paper on the social and literary history of the early years of last century were to set the question 'What do you know of Lydia White?', it is doubtful if many to-day would be able to answer it, for that once-famous woman has become almost entirely, and quite undeservedly, forgotten. Yet, during many years she reigned supreme in the bluestocking world of 19th-century London, and as hostess of the élite in the literary and fashionable circles of that period she was unrivalled.

Lydia Rogers White, as she was christened, was at one time thought to be an Irishwoman, but actually she could claim descent from an ancient, wealthy family in Wales, and, as she declared to Sir Walter Scott after visiting Edinburgh: 'I myself can shew you a Pedigree nearly as long as Princes Street, & tho I have hitherto been anxious to conceal the ungraceful appellation of Rogers (which it was one of the sins of my godfathers & godmothers to add to my names when they renounced all sins for me) yet you perhaps will teach me to be proud of it.'

On the death of her uncle, William Basset of Miskin, Glamorganshire, without issue, his property fell to his sister, Cecilia Basset, who had married Stephen White, a Bristol merchant. Lydia White was the third daughter of this marriage and co-heiress of the inheritance. Her eldest sister, Anne, became the wife of Francis Saunderson of Castle Saunderson, Co. Cavan, and it was Lydia's connection with the Saundersons, occasioning her to make frequent visits to Ireland, that probably explained the belief that she was Irish.

During the latter part of the 18th century she proved a centre of attraction at the Pump Room, Bath, on account of her ready wit and

social talents. While these gaieties were in progress, however, her father fell ill and she withdrew from her entertainments, shut herself up in her father's sick-room, and nursed him for two years. By the winter of 1798 he was dead and on £1200 a year Lydia had gone to live at Richmond, in Wick House, built by Sir Joshua Reynolds. About the same time she went to Brighton and there she was greatly admired by Samuel Rogers, the wealthy bachelor banker poet, who described her as 'a most charming and elegant woman of about thirty-five.'

Early in the 19th century she frequented the assemblies of Mrs Mary Tighe, the poetess, at her house in Dominick Street, Dublin, where the hostess was so enfeebled by illness that, having lost the use of her limbs, she lay on a sofa to receive her intellectual guests, and it was at a dinner given by Mrs Tighe at Tunbridge Wells that Lydia first met Mary Berry, the famous surviving bluestocking from Horace Walpole's time.

TOWARDS the end of November 1807

Lydia travelled to Scotland with her English servant. She carried with her a card of introduction to Sir Walter Scott and his wife from her friend, Anna Seward, the Swan of Lichfield. A month after her arrival in Edinburgh, Scott informed Lady Louisa Stuart that the visitor was 'what Oxonians call a lioness of the first order, with stockings nineteen-times-nine dyed blue, very lively, very good-humoured, and extremely absurd. It is very diverting to see the sober Scotch ladies stare at this phenomenon.'

Lady Louisa twitted Scott with his surrender to Lydia's attractions and Scott had to appeal to her for mercy. 'Pray don't triumph over

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me too much,' he replied. 'I stood a very respectable siege; but she caressed my wife, coaxed my children, and made, by dint of cake and pudding, some impression even upon the affections of my dog: so, when all the outworks were carried, the main fortress had no choice but to surrender on honourable terms.'

Her Scottish visit was protracted, for she was determined to tour the Highlands. Scott and his wife accompanied her as far as Loch Katrine. The weather was superb, and Lydia attempted much sketching, on which Scott commented that 'the cataracts delineated bore a singular resemblance to haycocks, and the rocks much correspondence to large, old-fashioned cabinets with their folding-doors open. So much for Lydia, whom I left on her journey through the Highlands, but by what route she had not resolved. I gave her three plans, and think it likely she will adopt none of them.' Any inconvenience she and her servant may have experienced as they travelled about was forgotten in enjoyment of the magnificent scenery. They were, as she confessed, delighted with 'the glorious place—indeed with all that we see, hear, feel, or understand in Scotland.'

For nearly six years she and Scott kept up a correspondence. Her letters exhibit an occasional fondness for quizzing. When she received a print of Scott's portrait on 24th March 1810, for instance, she acknowledged 'that which is above all price to me' in these words: 'I expect it to speak to me every moment—it will ever be considered as my most valuable possession & handed down to Posterity with no small pride as presented to me by *you*,' and, telling him that the likeness made him look as if he were repeating his verses on love from *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, she added: 'Pray, what does Mrs Scott say to your writing about *blue eyes*? She is, however, very safe & knows she has no rivals but the maids of Helicon with whom (thank God) she must be content to hold a divided empire.'

By 1811 Lydia had settled to live in London, except for periodical visits to France and Italy, and from there on 19th March she gave Scott an amusing account of her bluestocking pursuits. '*We*,' she wrote, 'are all grasping at the Tree of Knowledge as eagerly as if it was still forbidden fruit, & the fine ladies not only attend the Lectures of the Philosophers in Albemarle Street & hear with complacency

from Dr Smith that frogs have *no tails* & that fishes have *finns* with many equally recondite truths, but they flock in crowds... in Frith Street, Soho, to learn a new art of memory for which they pay 5 guineas, but whether for value received or not I cannot positively say.'

In the autumn of that year Lydia was again Mrs Tighe's guest at Tunbridge Wells, whence the house-party made excursions into the surrounding country, one of them to Mayfield, 'when Lydia was conspicuous on horseback.'

She soon became completely immersed in the upper social sphere, and in January 1813 she was not only being entertained at Lord Guilford's seat, Wroxton Abbey, Oxfordshire, but was also providing entertainment for his lordship's tenants, for she had discovered she possessed talents for theatricals. Then, in the summer of 1814, she informed Scott that she was going to Paris and Brussels, and intended to give up her house, 59 Montague Square. 'I am in all the confusion of packing Books & every thing else to give up my House when I go abroad. It is too small & should I return in the spring to England, I must take another, but I have a hankering after Italy & perhaps shall wander far before I see these shores again.'

LYDIA did take another house, No. 113 Park Street, where, presiding over her brilliant salons, she became one of London's famous bluestocking hostesses. The residence was situated on the western boundary of Mayfair and within that parallelogram between Oxford Street, Piccadilly, Regent Street, and Hyde Park, which, as the witty Sydney Smith maintained, 'enclosed more intelligence and ability, to say nothing of wealth and beauty, than the world had ever collected in such a space before.' Near at hand were Sydney Smith himself in the adjoining Green Street, Park Lane, the celebrated Mary and Agnes Berry in Curzon Street, Sir Henry Holland, the eminent physician, in Mount Street, and, later, Sir Humphry and Lady Davy in Park Street itself.

Almost every profession was represented by the distinguished personalities who gravitated to No. 113—the church, politics, philosophy, law, medicine, literature, and the stage. Among the social lions and lionesses whom Lydia gathered round her were Lady Charlotte Bury, Lord and Lady Byron, Stratford

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Canning, Lord and Lady Charlemont, Sir John and Lady Copley, the Davys, Maria Edgeworth, the Guilfords, Captain Basil Hall, Henry Hallam, the Rev. William Harness, Abraham Hayward, Sir Henry Holland, Washington Irving, John Gibson Lockhart and his wife, Lord Lytton, Sir Thomas Charles and Lady Morgan, Tom Moore, Cyrus Redding, Samuel Rogers, Sir Walter Scott, Mrs Sarah Siddons, Horace and James Smith, Sydney Smith, the Duchess of Sussex, and Wordsworth.

Of this later Lydia White, the bluestocking hostess, we obtain a composite picture from the journals and memoirs of some of those who went regularly to her assemblies. When in May 1813 Maria Edgeworth, the novelist, with her father and stepmother, sojourned in London, they lodged at 10 Holles Street, near Cavendish Square, from where Maria wrote to her friend, Miss Ruxton: 'Lydia White has been very kind to us, and eager to bring together people who would suit and please us; very agreeable dinner at her house; she conducts these *bel esprit* parties well; her vivacity breaks through the constraint of those who stand upon great reputations, and are afraid of committing themselves.'

We next hear of Lydia visiting Lady Westmorland at Brighton and appearing once more in private theatricals. She figured as 'the fair heroine,' and in a performance of Mrs Inchbald's comedy, *The Wedding Day*, she played the chief character, Lady Contest.

During the next three years she spent much time abroad. In 1815 she joined in the general rush to Paris, returning, as Scott said, 'with the humour of forty fancies pricked upon her cap for a feather'; in 1816 she was 'in full force' at Florence; and in 1818 she reached Naples. An amusing incident of the rouge-cheeked bluestocking of Mayfair was told by Major Henry Stisted of the 1st Dragoons. It formed, he said, 'a whimsical rencontre between the Lady Blue-to-the-Garters and a Neapolitan pastry-cook.' Wishing to give an English tea-party, Lydia sent for *Signor Pasticcere* (pastry-cook) to order a cake. 'She thought herself quite intelligible in desiring to have "un gateau"—"un gateau." It was in vain the poor Italian protested he had no "Gatto" (the Italian for a cat), wondering the Lady should ask him for a Cat. She vociferated "gateau," "gateau." He denied "Gatto. Diavolo!" And there is no knowing how long they would have made a

noise in the world had not a passing acquaintance interfered.'

BY 1819 Lydia was back in London, but, alas, she was a changed woman physically! She maintained her high spirits, but she was suffering from a fatal disease. She had, in fact, become a victim of dropsy, which compelled her, like her friend Mrs Tighe, to dispense hospitality in a reclining posture from a sofa. In that condition, said her friend the Rev. William Harness, then minister of St Anne's, Soho, 'brave in paint and plaster—a wonderful work of art—she underwent all the labour necessary to produce the grand effect, not from vanity or affectation, but from motives of pure benevolence. "Were I," she observed, "to present myself as I naturally am, without any of these artificial adornments, instead of being a source of pleasure, and perhaps amusement, to my friends, I should plunge them into the profoundest melancholy."'

To create the proper bluestocking atmosphere, her drawing-room was decorated with blue furniture and blue hangings, and there, as a kind of acknowledged social observance, the most approved guests of dinner-parties elsewhere would look in and be sure of a hearty welcome, of good company, and of complete freedom from constraint. For these late night and early morning festivities conformed, in some measure, to the French salon, with sparkling conversation. The whimsical licence of Lydia's own speech, indeed, gave sanction to it in her guests.

Nevertheless, for all her pretensions to mannish talk, the quality of her repartee was essentially feminine. Indeed, it would have satisfied Lord Jeffrey, the critic, who, when speaking about literary females, stipulated 'that there was no objection to the blue stocking provided the petticoat came low enough down.'

Two specimens of Lydia's playful sallies have been preserved. Hearing that Talma, the French actor, engaged to play Sylla in the tragedy of that name, looked so like Napoleon that he was ordered to put on a curly wig, Lydia remarked: 'Why, were he to do that, we should hardly know Scylla from Charybdis.' Again, at one of her small dinners the company, consisting of Whigs except herself, discussed the desperate prospects of their party. 'Yes,' said Sydney

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Smith, 'we are in a most deplorable condition; we must do something to help ourselves; I think we had better sacrifice a Tory virgin.' This was partially addressed to Lydia, who immediately applied the allusion to Iphigenia by saying: 'Ah, I believe there is nothing the Whigs would not do to raise the wind!' In the classical legend Calchas told Agamemnon that the Greek fleet at Aulis would be wind-bound until he fulfilled his vow of sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia to appease the goddess Artemis.

HOW had Lydia White gained such an ascendancy in the social world? The Miss Berrys had come out under the patronage of Horace Walpole, and Lady Davy, another of the bluestockings, had her own fortune, her connections, and latterly Sir Humphry Davy's fame, to trade upon, but Lydia did not possess great means, nor was she connected with any of the leading English families. 'It is not everyone,' said Abraham Hayward, the essayist and one of her friends, 'however ready to give dinners to the élite of the literary or fashionable world, that can get the élite to dine with them.' The only explanation Hayward could offer was the fact that Lydia's moderate means were sufficient for her chosen art of entertainment. She achieved the goal by cultivating influential manners and attractive conversation. And by that means she triumphed. Well might Lockhart summarise her as 'the inimitable woman who so long ruled without a rival in the soft realms of blue Mayfair.'

From 1819 to 1826 Tom Moore, the Irish poet, was a regular attendant at these assemblies, and his popularity was largely due to his melodious singing. One evening when Washington Irving, known as 'the Magnus Apollo of the bas bleus,' was present, Moore, as he confided in his diary under 16th July 1824, sang 'to as ugly a group of old damsels (with the exception of Lady Listowel) as ever were brought together.'

Moore, however, was only one of several contemporary poets countenanced by Lydia, but they were not all as appreciative of her hospitality as they might have been. Byron, for instance, satirised the milieu in a literary eclogue, 'The Blues,' and introduced Lydia as Miss Diddle, Lady Beaumont as Lady Bluemount, and himself as one Inkle. On Lady Bluemount's reminding her friends that 'Miss

Diddle invites us to sup,' Inkle exclaims:

'Then at two hours past midnight we all meet again,

For the sciences, sandwiches, hock, and champagne!'

Another poetical effusion, in an even less amiable strain, came from the pen of Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton, then a youth of twenty-two, who had an utter contempt for the bluestocking circles. He expressed his sentiments thus in a satire on Almack's, the celebrated dancing resort:

To Lady S . . . , for cakes and cards,

Flock ancient lords on Wednesday nights;

While darkest blues and lightest bards

'Refresh their souls' at Lydia White's . . .

O Genius, thou should'st only dwell

On lonely mount, in secret cell . . .

In truth thou wert not made to sip

At Lydia White's thy wonted tea,

With hoarded jest, and laughing lip,

The Touchstone of the Coterie.

That poem appeared in *Weeds and Wild-flowers* (1825), a book that flourished for a time on the drawing-room tables of fashionable mansions, where it was not passed unnoticed by the literary ladies, old and young.

Probably one of these ladies was Lady Charlotte Bury, the novelist and formerly lady-in-waiting to Caroline, Princess of Wales, and doubtless she read these lines with approval, for, although at first she seemed favourably disposed towards Lydia's evening coterie, she soon grew querulous and dissatisfied with them.

Here is her ladyship's first impression of her new acquaintance. 'Immovable from dropsy, with a swollen person and an emaciated face, she is placed on an inclined plane raised high upon a sofa, which put me in mind of the corpse of the late Queen of Spain in Rome, in the church of the Santa Maria Novella. But even under this calamity she has many blessings—a comfortable house, and the attentions of the world, which are pleasant even when they are mingled with the alloy of knowing that they are paid as a price to obtain selfish amusement and gratification. What more solid advantages she may enjoy I cannot say, because she is a stranger to me. There is something, also, pleasant in the reflection that the world, even the gay world, do not totally neglect those who are about to leave it . . . The evening was peculiarly agreeable.'

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But compare Lady Charlotte's description of a dinner at 113 Park Street seven months later, and note how the tone has changed to cattishness. 'Miss White sat with the ladies in the dining-room till everybody was nearly asleep. I never saw any one follow this system of remaining so long at table, except the Princess of Wales. It is high treason to say so; yet Miss White's house, which is reckoned so famous for its agreeable reunions, does not frequently afford me the amusement it is supposed to give all those who have the good fortune to obtain an *entrée* therein. At the dinner table sometimes the wits and mighty spirits collected round it display their conversational talents; but the evenings are often very dull, and I have been present at many a party, composed of insignificant persons, who have sung and danced, and diversified their amusements, which have been much more gay and enlivening than the learned and classic meetings held at Lydia White's.'

ABOUT 1821 Lydia's condition deteriorated to such an extent that everyone believed she was at death's door. 'Poor creature,' exclaimed Maria Edgeworth, 'how she can go through it I cannot imagine, she is dying! It is dreadful to look at her!' The indomitable woman, however, continued to fight bravely for life, refused to give up her hospitalities, and at the coronation of George IV she was at Lord Guilford's.

Then in 1823 her illness took a more serious turn, and, of course, reports multiplied that now surely her end had come. 'I hear poor Lydia White is dying, game to the last,' wrote Scott. But no, like Charles II, she was to be an unconscionable time a-dying. Her amazing vitality and her determination not to give in persisted, thus defying all her friends' gloomy anticipations. In truth, with characteristic eccentricity, Lydia transformed her affliction into a subject for jest by decking herself out as an exhibition-piece.

This species of originality gave rise to various forms of amusement. One morning Cyrus Redding, the journalist, met a lady of his acquaintance at her own door. Stepping into her carriage, she remarked: 'Come with me. I am going to see Lydia White—she is really dying.' 'I pray you excuse me,' said Redding, 'it can't be true—it is only two years since she began to die.' 'It is true now. You had better

come once more.' But Redding was not to be persuaded. 'Do excuse me,' he pleaded. 'I have gone a dozen times to Park Street, and been disappointed. I cannot afford to lose so much time on a mortuary uncertainty.'

Lydia's continued existence also drew a witticism from Samuel Rogers. 'How wonderfully she does hold out,' he commented. 'They may say what they will, but Miss White and Missolonghi are the most remarkable things going.' The Greek town of Missolonghi underwent a long siege, in which Byron participated, before it was captured from the Turks on 22nd April 1826.

But there were occasions when this cadaverous spectacle had a repulsive rather than an amusing effect. In December 1825, when J. G. Lockhart, who had just become editor of the *Quarterly Review*, and his wife Sophia were established in London, they called on Lydia. Afterwards Sophia conveyed her reactions to her mother, Lady Scott, in this vivid little picture. 'Oh Mamma, how shocked I was to see Miss White. I think I never saw a creature so near death or such an object. It made me feel quite sick to see her and yet there she was on a sofa, dressed, rouged, in a white hat and feathers, and I must say that she talked in such a very indecent manner to the gentlemen that I wished myself anywhere. I never heard anything the least like it before . . . I never heard such a chatter and to so very little purpose.'

Nevertheless, she lingered on, 'brave in paint and plaster'; and in November 1826, on returning from France, Scott and his daughter Anne still found her 'extended on a couch, frightfully swelled, unable to stir, rouged, jesting, and dying.'

The end came with suddenness early in 1827. She had given a dinner party on the previous Friday, and had written with her own hand invitations for another one. To safeguard her eyes and to economise lighting, she was accustomed, when alone, to sit to a late hour without lights in an upper room. On this particular night her manservant, having placed candles on the table in the front drawing-room, waited for his mistress to ring for him to light them. He imagined he heard something fall, but, as the bell did not ring, he did not go up. Then, becoming suspicious that his mistress remained so long in the dark, he went upstairs, entered the room, and found her lying on the floor. When some of her party arrived to dine, they found she was dead.

On hearing the sad news, Scott paid tribute to her by entering in his *Journal* under 2nd February 1827: 'She used to tease me with her youthful affectations—her dressing like the Queen of Chimney-sweeps on May-day morning... But she was a woman of much wit, and had a feeling and kind heart. She made her point good, a *bas-bleu* in London to a point not easily

attained... In a word, she was not and would not be forgotten... and the world, much abused for hard-heartedness, was kind in her case... Poor Lydia!'

Not long after her death, the house at No. 113 Park Street was put up for sale. Its glory as the centre of bluestocking Mayfair had departed with the passing of its presiding genius.

Gruesome Traffic

Early Maori Trade in Baked Tattooed Heads

GEORGE M. FOWLDS

IT is remarkable how often in national and international affairs far-reaching effects arise out of what seem to be unimportant happenings. Possibly one of the factors which provoked the earlier intervention of British authority in New Zealand was the disgust felt by the authorities in New South Wales, under whose jurisdiction the colony originally was, at the ghoulish traffic which had developed in the baked tattooed heads of Maori chiefs. To the extent that the heads were a treated product of the country, they might well be regarded as one of the colony's first manufactured articles for export.

THE earliest regular callers to New Zealand's shores were the whalers and sealers who operated in fairly considerable numbers in South Pacific waters, and made periodic visits to certain harbours, chiefly Russell, the first capital, for refitting, fuel and water. Many of the officers and men bartered simple articles with the Maoris for the baked tattooed heads of chiefs. This accounts for the heads being found in museums in Britain, America, and on the Continent, while there is a small

collection in the Auckland and other museums of the Dominion.

Ordinarily, the remains of chiefs were regarded with awe by the major portion of the Maori people and were mostly deposited by the priests in secret places. When some of the Maoris found there was a market for these objects, efforts were made to search out the hiding-places, and such heads as were discovered were clandestinely exchanged with the visiting ships for small trinkets and other coveted objects.

The Maoris, with their usual resourcefulness, took a desperate step to meet and profit by the macabre demand. Heretofore, only chiefs and warriors were tattooed. Now, however, the Maoris began compelling captured slaves to undergo the painful and slow process of having their faces designed with intricate patterns. When the operation was completed, sometimes to the appraisal of the buyer, the captives' heads were summarily chopped off and put through a special baking process to preserve them. While in normal life, then, the captured Maori occupied but a humble place, by these means he achieved on death an unwanted elevation, entering into the category of a chief and being distributed the world over,

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albeit only in the form of a baked tattooed head.

In pre-European days, the life of the Maori, on account of the continuous intertribal wars, was highly precarious. If not slain in battle, he was always liable, if captured, to provide a delicate morsel for the tribal cooking-pot. But now, with the advent of the white man, came a new danger, a grim value attaching to the possessor of a well-shaped face that would carry a good design.

At one period the cost of a good head ran up as high as £30, but when there was a glut, the price dropped to as low as £2. In

the life of the Rev. Samuel Marsden (1764-1838), the apostle of New Zealand, it is recorded that a Maori chief staying with Marsden in Sydney was, on being shown one of the baked heads, at once reduced to tears by recognising the face of a former close relative.

For one reason and another, including the traffic in baked heads, the Government of New South Wales felt constrained to extend its nominal jurisdiction in New Zealand, and in 1831 it prohibited the baked head traffic under a fine of £40, finding it necessary a few years later to send over a Resident with two or three constables to uphold the authority of Queen Victoria.

Hound

*I and my fellows,
Drunk with scent,
Heady, violent,
Clashing like sound,
Pricking as sharp
As stubble that pierces the tender pads in autumn,*

*Brush the rime
From the fern, from the frond,
Splay with our broad
Feet the tender
Plant, and the bramble
We break with breasts that do not feel its thorn.*

*And our voices ring
In the glade, in the gloomy
Coppice, the spinney
Light with birches,
Darkened with beeches,
And the still air echoes with horns and the trampling of hooves.*

*How can pity
Make our hearts molten,
When red fur maddens,
And rank scent drives us
On over the clogging
Slope of the furrowed earth rucked up by the plough?*

*Only when, cornered,
The livid lip
Draws back snarling,
And a beast by beasts
Is killed, do we sense
Like a ghost, far off, the doom of our own death waiting.*

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH.



The Highest Bid

WINIFRED WILLIAMS

I WAS a little over sixteen when my parents decided to take me away from the urban office, where I was happy, and send me to become a shorthand-typist at a dye-works much nearer our moorland village. I had not been interviewed by my prospective employer, for it appeared that he relied absolutely on the judgment of the young lady in charge of his bookkeeping, and, as she was an acquaintance of Father's, the job was practically in my pocket from the moment a vacancy was imminent.

It was my first introduction to nepotism; until then I had believed that all the jobs in England were bestowed according to merit. But instead of appreciating my good fortune, I protested loudly against leaving my present employment, and said, wildly and unconvincingly, that I had only to ask for a rise in salary and I should get it.

'But you see,' Mother said patiently, 'even if Mr Clay could pay you another ten shillings a week to match what you'd get at the dye-works, there's your railway fare to consider. If you go to the dye-works, you'll have no fares at all.'

'As for walking to your work—' Father broke in, 'when I met Clara on Featherstone football field last Saturday, she said it 'ud do

you a sight more good walking than sitting on your backside in a stuffy train.'

'I'm sure she never did!' Mother retorted. 'Clara's very well-spoken.'

I knew little about Clara, except that she was an exemplary bookkeeper and that she went to football matches. I had seen her once or twice at the Saturday-night balls in the village, where she was always the best-dressed dancer, though a dearth of males often obliged her to seek out a female partner. Her face had a striking, almost masculine, beauty; but a sarcastic twist to the wide red mouth and a power-loving glint in the hard-blue eyes made me reluctant to become her underling.

I had once seen her in the drapery department of the Co-operative Stores, helping her mother buy a skirt, and her brusqueness had strongly repelled me. The faded mother had been so timid, so deferential, with her beseeching smiles and her 'Yes, Clara' and 'No, Clara,' and after humbly expressing a wish for navy blue, she had meekly accepted the iron-grey Clara had thought suitable for her.

There was no doubt, though, that we needed the extra shillings. Father's earnings as a spinner in the local textile-mill were not nearly so good as they had been in the boom follow-

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ing the First World War, yet our living expenses were increasing. The glorious period when wages were swollen by bonuses and employers provided free charabanc trips to the seaside had come to an end. For a working-class family, our living expenses were high, as Mother had middle-class tastes, and my twelve-year-old brother, now in a secondary school, needed expensive books and sports clothes.

'Besides,' Mother went on, 'you've been learning shorthand and typing at nights for a year now, and it's a pity not to use them when you're so good at them.'

I looked bitterly at Mother's plain, intelligent face. She detested flattery; yet now, to make me go willingly to the dye-works, she was praising my proficiency in subjects of which she was totally ignorant.

'That reminds me,' Father said cheerfully, 'I asked Clara to drop in any night when she was passing, to give you a bit of advice and look you over. It'll be either to-day or to-morrow, I fancy, to let you give a week's notice on Saturday.'

'You might have asked her which night!' Mother gave him a reproachful look. 'If she doesn't come to-night, I shall have to miss the League of Nations Committee meeting to-morrow.' Mother believed in committees and public meetings as a means toward abolishing unemployment, poverty, and war. At that time she was trying to prop up the League of Nations by distributing pamphlets and getting speakers to address the tiny audiences that she gathered into the village hall by dint of unrelenting propaganda.

'Well, the committee can argue for one night without you being there to put your oar in,' Father commented. 'If you dropped down dead, they'd have to manage,' he added cheerfully.

BUT Mother's fears were unjustified, for Clara arrived that night. Father was just getting ready to go to 'The Blue Ball' for a pint of beer and a masculine argument when the fateful knock came at the door.

'I'm right glad to see you, Clara,' Father said warmly. 'Come in, lass. I was just going out, but I shall stop at home now you've turned up.'

'It's very kind of you to come, Clara,' Mother said quietly. 'Do take off your coat and hat.'

'I'll hang 'em up next to mine,' Father said jovially.

Clara did as she was bid, and then came into the living-room and sat in the rocking-chair Father pulled close to the fire for her.

'Well, is that job still open?' Father always believed in getting to the point at once.

'Yes, it is.' Clara turned her stern face in my direction and gave me a careful scrutiny. 'You can start a week from Monday. Mr Thompson said that my recommendation was enough.' She smiled complacently. 'But you'll have to work hard. What's your shorthand speed?'

'Eighty,' I said.

'Oh, she's a champion at shorthand!' Father cried.

'And your typing?'

'Not so good,' I said truthfully.

'She's short o' practice, that's all,' Father said. 'Give her a week or two, and she'll be clattering away like a young horse.'

'She might not be very quick for a while.' Mother spoke calmly, though the pallor of her face showed her agitation. 'But she'll try hard.'

'We've never had a poor worker in our family,' Father declared proudly.

'You'll be there at eight,' Clara said. Then, seeing my look of astonishment, she continued sharply: 'It used to be nine, but I told Mr Thompson the work couldn't be got through properly unless we began at eight, so he changed it. I believe in starting early. And you'll have three-quarters of an hour for lunch, which I find quite enough.'

'Plenty,' said Father, looking admiringly at the paragon.

I concealed my opinion, but it seemed pretty mean to me.

'How long have you worked there, Clara?' Mother asked timidly.

'Six years.' Clara's face had a self-satisfied smirk. 'But we've had to dismiss four shorthand-typists in that time, I'm sorry to say.'

'Whatever for?' cried Father.

'One came late, and the others didn't do their work properly. I had a lot of trouble with the last one. Yesterday her mother stopped me in the street and tried to threaten me. However, the girl leaves us a week from Saturday—and without getting a reference, for Mr Thompson agreed with me that she doesn't deserve one.'

'Well, I hope nobody'll ever say that of a

child of mine.' Father looked at me angrily, as though I had already let the family down. Then he turned to Mother. 'Now that's settled, what about a bite o' supper?'

'Come and help me.' Mother gave me a commanding glance, and I followed her into the kitchen.

MY twelve-year-old brother was there, busily mending a burst bicycle-tyre. 'Has she gone yet?' he asked hopefully.

We heard music from the living-room and gathered that Father was playing the gramophone to entertain Clara. He had selected his favourite piece, an extremely noisy overture performed by a brass band.

'Why do you dislike her?' Mother asked me. 'I think she's very nice.'

'Eight o'clock,' I said, putting the pan of frying fat on the gas-cooker. 'And it used to be nine till she changed it.'

'It shows how conscientious she is,' Mother said severely.

'What are you talking about, Mother?' My brother lifted his pink, innocent face inquiringly.

'Never mind,' Mother retorted. 'Why must you take my best enamelled bowl to test your tyre instead of using a bucket?'

'Because it's bigger,' he answered promptly.

When I went into the living-room to lay the table, Father was playing 'Destiny' waltz on the gramophone.

'Come on, Clara,' he said, holding out an inviting arm. 'We're both champion waltzers.'

'I can't waltz on a carpet.' Clara's look was of Olympian disdain; but Father was as trusting and guileless as an infant, and it was lost on him.

I took the tablecloth out of the sideboard drawer. In the oval mirror I could see the slightly sneering mouth, the Grecian nose, and the heavy-lidded eyes. As the sad waltz came to an end, the eyes turned with sudden alertness in my direction. 'What Mr Thompson values above everything,' Clara said, 'is efficiency and speed.'

But I didn't care in the least what Mr Thompson valued, for I was resolved never to meet him. Nothing on earth would induce me to work with Clara. Asking Mr Clay for more money would be a painful ordeal, but not nearly so humiliating as trying to please this hard perfectionist.

'THAT'S settled, then,' Clara said, as we gathered round the table. 'You can give notice to-morrow or Saturday, but the sooner they know, the better. You should always study your employer's convenience.'

'I like him to study mine a bit as well,' Father said, laughing.

But Clara cut him short with a freezing stare. 'I suppose you can get a reference?' she asked me.

'Reference?' Father exclaimed. 'Why, the old chap thinks the world of her. Feeds her up on chocolate, lends her books, takes her to the theatre.'

'We don't do that kind of thing at the dye-works,' Clara said coldly.

At Christmas, Mr Clay had given me a great box of chocolates, tied with red-satin ribbon, and on my birthday he and his buxom wife had taken me to a performance of *The Gondoliers*. They didn't do that kind of thing at the dye-works; but it didn't matter, for I wasn't going there . . .

I always travelled to my job in town on a fussy steam-train that consisted of an ancient engine and a couple of shabby coaches. I had once rather despised it; but when I saw it next morning, I knew I had grown desperately fond of it. When I reached the familiar street and climbed the steps to the neat, white-painted office, I prayed that only Mr Clay would have arrived, so that I could get the ordeal over before the rest of the staff came in.

But Miss Shuttleworth was already unlocking the ledger cupboard. 'Good-morning!' she cried musically. She was in the town's operatic society and had a lovely voice; but, as she was extremely plain, she was always given unsympathetic parts, such as that of Lady Bellaston in *Tom Jones*. I contrasted her kind, knobbly face with Clara's classical features and was just going to tell her of the trouble I was in when the door opened and the beautiful Miss Dawson floated in.

'Oh, dear, I'm so tired!' She took off her elegant coat and her exhibitionist hat. 'I was dancing at "The Golden Fleece" till one o'clock.'

'You should save "The Golden Fleece" for Saturdays.' Miss Shuttleworth gave a tinkling laugh.

I looked at Miss Dawson's languid face and wished I could send her to work with Clara. But, of course, Clara would never allow such a beauty to set foot in the dye-works.

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FIVE minutes later Mr Clay came puffing up the stairs. He was stout, but he couldn't bear to walk slowly, for though he was immensely good-natured, he was also impatient. 'Good-morning, ladies!' he cried breathlessly. He hung his hat and overcoat on the mahogany stand and went to his private office.

I scurried after him and shut the door behind me. 'Can I speak to you for a moment, please, Mr Clay?'

'Oh, it's you, Topsy!' he exclaimed. He had nicknamed me Topsy, he said, solely on account of my bushy hair. 'Look, get me Watts and Company of Manchester on the telephone. I've just met the foreman of the finishing-shop, and that new cutting-machine has gone wrong again. I must talk to them immediately.'

I went sadly back to the general office, realising the inadvisability of asking for more salary just when the new cutting-machine had failed us. But if Watts and Company would promise to send someone quickly, Mr Clay's mood might change, and I should have another chance. I left the door half-open, and when I switched the call through I heard Mr Clay's loud and bitter report to Manchester and waited anxiously to see if Manchester could soothe him.

'Dear me, we are upset this morning,' Miss Dawson remarked, running a silver-backed comb through her blonde hair. She emptied the trayful of morning mail she had brought from the letter-box and started to open the envelopes.

I looked at the diamond engagement-ring on her long finger and wondered if I could ask her outright how soon she proposed to get married. I had been understudying her part for a year now, and I was anxious to play it. But she was so faithless and conceited that she was quite capable of returning the young man's ring and accepting some one else's.

It wasn't until afternoon that I was able to speak to Mr Clay. Although the Manchester firm had promised to send an expert the very next day, which was as much as could be expected, from that moment onward a malevolent spirit seemed to be at work preventing Mr Clay from having a moment of privacy I could seize on. Four commercial travellers came with samples of raw wool, so that I had to fetch Mr Saville, the works manager, for a conference. Even when he and Mr Clay had

decided what to purchase, he stayed discussing other problems.

My stomach began to ache with the racking anxiety, and I ate barely half my date-and-apple sandwiches at lunch. Mr Clay went home to lunch, as usual; but the moment he got back to the office, a man from the textile union came to argue a case of accident compensation, a thing I had never known to happen before.

'You look quite ill, dear,' Miss Shuttleworth said, giving me a kindly glance. 'If you've got a headache, I can let you have some aspirin.'

I told her it was my stomach that was queasy, not my head; but as she had nothing in her desk for stomachs, she gave me advice instead, and begged me always to chew every mouthful of food at least thirty-seven times. I said I'd try to remember, and returned to my work.

To relieve Miss Shuttleworth, I had recently been given the task of calculating the spinners' wages; but in my feverish state the smallest sum seemed like a mathematical problem. At four o'clock I thankfully closed the wages book and went to make tea.

TEN minutes later, I was with Mr Clay in his office, offering him a trembling cup and saucer. 'Mr Clay,' I began breathlessly, 'I must speak to you. It's dreadful. I've got to leave you for good.'

'Whatever for?' Mr Clay put down his cup in astonishment.

I blurted out the story of Clara.

'And you don't want to go?' he asked. 'Not even for another ten shillings a week?'

I looked at his great face, so full of surprise and sympathy. He had always treated me like a favourite daughter, and now I might be leaving him to work for a heartless tyrant. The idea was so appalling that tears of grief and self-pity started rolling down my face.

He got up from his chair and came around the desk. 'Listen, Topsy,' he said, 'you're only sixteen, and it's a bit young for a short-hand-typist. Tell your mother to let you wait till Miss Dawson gets married next summer. Then you can have her job and fifteen shillings a week more. In the meantime, I can give you another five, though I shouldn't, for I've got a board of directors that asks a lot of questions. So stop crying, and talk it over at home.'

THE HIGHEST BID

'That's more than six months to wait,' I sobbed. 'And we won't be certain she'll get married even then. You know how she is.'

'She'll get married, all right.' Mr Clay's mouth twitched in a brief smile. 'But I can't turn her out till she wants to go, can I? Now run along and have some tea. And let me give you a word of warning, Topsy,' he added. 'You shouldn't get so attached to people.'

'I can't help it,' I said miserably. 'It's because I've been so happy here. You've been so kind to me, and the office is so beautiful.' I looked at the white woodwork, the mahogany desk, and the shining floor, and burst out: 'You don't know what the dye-works office is like—far away from everywhere, and frosted glass in the windows so you can't look out, and Clara watching to see if you make a single mistake.'

'You certainly look on the black side,' Mr Clay commented. 'Now, tell me, weren't you just as frightened before you came here?'

'No, I wasn't,' I told him. 'I'd seen the office and I knew I should like it.'

'Well, we've liked having you here,' Mr Clay said kindly.

My heart sank. Already he was talking as if I belonged to the past. He had lived a long time, he was used to saying good-bye to employees, and he would relinquish me as easily as he had the others.

THE telephone rang in the general office, and I heard Miss Shuttleworth answer it for me. I hurried back to my desk just as she was putting the call through to Mr Clay. Miss Dawson, who was spasmodically efficient, was rapidly typing a letter. I watched her well-manicured fingers lightly tapping the keyboard and reflected that she was the one obstacle between me and happiness. Other people might be dismissed for laziness, or be run over by motor-cars, or die of one of a hundred different diseases—but not Miss Dawson. Mr Clay, incurably benevolent, put up with her yawns, her late arrivals, her laziness and her irregular spelling, and would go on enduring them until she chose to get married. She didn't even get scolded for her lapses. But a few minutes later when she took in his letters for signature I heard him pointing out a spelling mistake in a loud, protesting voice and comforted myself with the thought that he would be greatly relieved when she eventually went.

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At five, as Miss Dawson was shrouding her typewriter and Miss Shuttleworth was locking up her ledgers, I reached for my hat and coat and rushed out.

There was a thick fog in the street. As I ran along the murky pavement to the main road, where a clanging tramcar took me to the station, I rehearsed my case against the dye-works. Whatever my parents said, I would never go to that horrible place.

WHEN I got home, my favourite dinner was waiting, which seemed to me a bad sign.

Father had returned from the mill—he always arrived a few minutes before me. His hair was curly from his impetuous washing, and his red face shone. 'Well, what did the old chap say?' he asked cheerfully.

I told him. Mother stood on the hearthrug and listened.

'Then that's settled,' Father said. 'If he can't afford to pay you now, you can't afford to work for him. In this world, you work for them that pays best.'

I had meant to argue persuasively, to prove that allowing me to stay in town would be to their ultimate advantage; but this monstrous idea of going like a slave to the highest bidder put me in a rage immediately. Rather than go to Clara and the dye-works, I said, I would leave home and live in lodgings. But as we all knew the humblest landlady in the town would demand the whole of my week's salary for board and lodging, my threat was not impressive.

A week later, having said a dry-eyed farewell and received Mr Clay's cordial good wishes for the future, I descended the familiar brass-edged stairs for the last time.

AS I walked down the village High Street at seven-fifteen on the Monday following—although I had no idea of it, I was entering the most valuable period of my youth, a two-year sentence that would teach me to bear the bitterest rebuff with fortitude—I planned my future professional life. On the morning of my twenty-first birthday I would take the train to the town and visit Mr Clay. I visualised myself walking boldly into his private office—much slimmer and handsomer, and exquisitely dressed—and saying joyfully: 'I'm free now, Mr Clay. I can work for

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anyone I like, and the money doesn't matter.' In my vision, he smiled gloriously and held out his arms in a wide gesture of welcome. 'So you've come back to us,' he said. 'I can't

tell you how glad I am.' Yet all the time, as I went closer and closer to the dye-works and Clara, I knew perfectly well that I should never see him again.

The House that Jack Built

JOHN COLLEY

AFTER retiring from the Navy, I had suffered for years from the inconvenience of working indoors in the living-room, with my papers, books, and typewriter spread out on the table. At last, however, the constant 'Excuse me, dear, I want to lay the table' had its effect, and I determined to construct a retreat in the garden, where all my bits and pieces could rest undisturbed. So last summer I packed up writing and set to work on the job of building myself a study, office, hut, garden shelter, or what you will.

Being a hasty type, I consulted no one with building knowledge. I was certain that I knew just what I wanted. Bricklaying, I felt, was a little beyond me, and wood was too scarce and expensive, so I was more or less confined to two materials—concrete and asbestos sheet.

Having seen a neighbour's garage of asbestos sheet cracking away in a beautiful blaze, I thought I would try concrete on steel framing. A local woodyard had some steel frames consisting of four angle-irons riveted firmly together, and they were of a useful size, some six feet by two feet six. With a good deal of enthusiasm, and a nostalgic memory of my childhood Meccano, I bolted together eight of these frames in such a way that I had a fine framework about eleven feet long, by six feet high, by some six feet broad.

I laid no foundation. I argued that a rigid structure would find its own level, and I felt that a low ceiling did not matter as I wrote and typed sitting down, anyway.

Then I ordered some cement and sand, intending to fill in the walls and roof with concrete in shuttering. A search round a couple of junk-yards soon convinced me that the precious metals began with steel rods and then came gradually down by way of comparatively cheap platinum and gold.

However, I managed to run a lot of steel rods across the top of the frame, and then I set off to put shuttering underneath a part of the top in order to pour a piece of the roof. I had to take up the temporary floor in my loft in order to use the boards as shuttering, and even then I could only cast a quarter of the roof at a time. Still, I worked hard at the mixing of concrete, and after a lot of labour I poured the roof in four sections, that, due to the reinforcing, knit together rather well. As I stood back and surveyed what I had done, I suddenly realised that I had built the ideal Irishman's house. Yes, I had put the roof on first.

I FOUND that the steel frame stood very firm on the ground, but due to the weight of the heavy concrete roof it could be made to wobble dangerously by a gentle push. I thought that I ought to work on the walls from the outside in case it decided to fall down on me, but at this rather late hour I did some rough calculations and decided that everything would be all right.

With odd nuts and bolts I started to assemble the planks of wood into shuttering

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to take the walls up. I mixed concrete and rammed it down into the frames, using up all the scrap-iron I could gather for reinforcing. Everything, from old worn-out pokers to iron strips from old boxes, disappeared into the walls. I worked early and late.

Each morning I would get up eager to take off the boards and see how the previous day's concrete had set. I had to dodge about from one end of the structure to the other to make sure that I did not injure newly-set concrete. I cast wooden frames into the walls for the windows, and as a sop to my nautical upbringing I put a film-can into one wall, thus leaving a fine-looking porthole.

At strategic points I inserted little wooden blocks studded with nails, so that when the concrete set I could fix my bookshelves to the blocks, and I left one vertical frame empty to take the door. The structure stiffened as the walls rose round the steel framing. I found that I could walk about on the roof quite easily without causing any movement of the whole.

Always impetuous, I discovered that the concrete did not set fast enough for me, so I started to lay a concrete floor before the walls were complete. I had made provision for a sliding-door, and had purposely made the step about a foot high.

By this time my two nephews were very interested in my new 'house,' and one of them said: 'Uncle, it would be jolly fine to sail boats in.' This seemed such a good idea that I set the hose into the place and allowed it to fill with nine inches of water. For two days they played boats in it, whilst I paddled around fixing up the rest of the wall shuttering. Then I set about baling the water out.

I managed to dig a hole in the garden and run out a short piece of hose as a syphon, but it took a long time, and eventually I had to mop up with a cloth. Then the concrete dried out too quickly, but I sprayed the lot with a hose from time to time, and was surprised when a shower of rain penetrated slowly through the concrete roof.

The next time it dried out, I gave it a coat of waterproof cement paint, and that fixed it. When I had finished the walls and put in the windows, I painted the whole place inside and out with concrete paint. It looked a dazzling white.

Next I made some bookshelves and cupboards, and put in an electric radiator and two lights, and then I brought out all my

papers and books and installed them. The armchair that my wife had grown ashamed of, and the rug that had slightly gone in the middle, accompanied me to the new home, and I sat down in my new retreat to write.

It was very nice indeed to be able to leave everything at a moment's notice, just where it stood. The place encouraged me to work late, for the clicking of the typewriter could not be heard in the house. I wired an extension from the front-door bell, so that I could hear if anybody called, and I fixed up a loudspeaker worked from the indoor set, so that I could work to music if I wanted it. On the wall, a few photographs of my old ships gave the finishing-touch.

I settled down happily. I felt that at last I was completely organised. From a friend that owns a wool and hosiery shop I got a lot of stocking-boxes, and I used them to file odd letters and manuscripts. They stowed neatly on a shelf, and the description of the contents was printed on the end of each box. The house was now a lot tidier, and for convenience the office was hard to beat. From my seat I could reach the most-used objects, and I was doing fairly well.

But that was late summer. As autumn came along, the 'House that Jack Built' became a little cool, and the radiator had to be kept switched on in the evenings. The sliding-door allowed, or seemed to allow, a lot of heat to escape. My zest for working late became less pronounced. It seemed much warmer inside the house than in the office.

Then, after a rainy night it would feel very damp inside. The stamps turned a little clammy and envelopes in the drawer were found with their flaps stuck down. I began to keep stamps and envelopes indoors. Then I noticed a damp patch at the rear of my building and I found that the overhang of roof I had allowed was not sufficient, and on examining other buildings I saw that a little gully was always cast upside down to stop water running back and down walls.

I tried to attach a sloping board to deflect the water, but it failed to work. Then a tiny damp splotch no larger than a man's hand appeared on the ceiling, but this dried out quickly in the warmth from the radiator. Soon after, however, a damp blotch showed in a different place in the shape of a map of Ireland, and as large as a telephone directory.

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The weather got steadily colder and still another damp patch developed on the wall behind the bookshelves. At the same time a few books began to grow white whiskers. Rather funny how the newest books began to mildew first. It seemed as if the older tomes had outgrown it in their youth.

I interrupted my work to toast the books and rub their covers with furniture-polish, and the smell comforted me for some little time. The walls felt cold to the touch. Where the steel frames lurked under a couple of coats of concrete paint they became spotted with rust. I scraped them and painted them with oil-paint. On the ceiling yet more damp spots broke out.

I scrubbed the roof off and applied two more coats of concrete paint, and for a while the ceiling remained dry and clear. The damp persisted, however, and the best books were transferred indoors. One morning a big patch of damp appeared on the wall and the electric-light conduit had a few drops of moisture hanging down. Later, they evaporated, but these drops were the forerunners of millions.

The first frost made the whole ceiling a glistening parade of sweat, and from then on the steady drip persisted until the water froze on the ceiling. I rolled up the rest of the books in the rug and abandoned ship. The electric-radiator had long ceased to have any effect except to vaporise water in one corner so that it could condense in another. The walls ran with moisture. I fought back, because I did not want to admit failure.

ALTHOUGH I hate the smell of paraffin, I bought an oil-heater and set it in the middle of the floor. It did no more than produce a dry and dirty circle on the ceiling about eighteen inches in diameter. It thoroughly impregnated everything with the smell of oil, and hung soot on every surface.

I read up what I could find about sweating and condensation, and decided that what I wanted was a complete lining of wood or hardboard. Wood being out of the question, I bought some hardboard and set out to make a false ceiling. First I attached battens to the underside of the ceiling, and then screwed the sheets of hardboard to them. For a day or two it seemed to work, but suddenly a stream of drops poured down from the edges of the hardboard. The water was condensing

on the concrete ceiling just the same and then dripping on to my newly-made lining.

I took the hardboard down, and promptly found it to be in the way. For want of a better place to stow it, I laid it beneath the carpet in the drawing-room, where it still remains.

I argued: Obviously the ceiling wants something in the way of heat insulation joined to it. On a mild day I gave the ceiling a wipe off, applied a good coat of paste, and then stuck on sheets of newspaper, pages from periodicals, lining-paper, and other insulation. I intended to let the lot dry, and then white-wash it over. I imagined it being a fine dry ceiling.

But it never did dry. It remained grey and damp, and in forty-eight hours it had a crop of long white whiskers. The walls, too, had little beads of sweat, and the place smelt like a deathly dungeon, the smell of mildew almost beating down the strong smell of burnt paraffin.

Some days after, I moodily scraped the paper off the ceiling and thought about building a fireplace. A neighbour was about to install an anthracite cooking-stove, and this meant that her old boiler was now surplus, so she gave it to me. In one busy day I put the stove in and lit it up. With a short temporary chimney, it smoked so much that I could not remain inside the office, but after a while it got very hot and dried the place out. Unfortunately we could not spare the fuel to keep it going all winter, and the leakage of smoke blackened everything, including me, so I was unable to move back. I found also that if the fire went out the ceiling would be dripping again in the morning.

I seemed to have invented the ideal place for radiating heat to the surrounding atmosphere. But all at once I thought of the method I had seen in ships to prevent sweating. The deckheads and ship's side had all been painted with glue and then granulated cork thrown on. The cork had been later dis-tempered, and that was that.

I cycled down to the local greengrocer, who told me that the only thing packed in granulated cork nowadays was the Almeria grape, and the season was not yet. I tried with sawdust, but it was no good. It was late spring before I could use the place again, and then only for a time as the roof was beginning to leak once more.

I gave it a coat of good old-fashioned tax, and it stopped leaking. I found then that

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the sunshine seemed to be absorbed by the tar and transmitted through the ceiling, which consequently became pleasantly warm. By early summer I was able to go back again.

But now the sun started cracking the concrete here and there and the roof began to leak yet again. I considered covering it with asbestos or corrugated-iron, but in the end I gave it another generous coat of tar that seemed to fill up all the cracks and keep out the rain.

Slight cracks in the walls I filled with concrete paint, and I am still working in the place. But I know that as the autumn and winter creep on I shall be driven back into the house to hear my wife say: 'Just a minute, dear—while I lay the table.'

Meanwhile, if there is one amongst you with a taste for building, may I advise you to try any material in the world—wood, palm-fronds, mud, reeds, brick, tar-paper, lath and plaster, coral-blocks, stone, slate—but, if you love me, don't use concrete.

The Little Ship on Lake Tanganyika

JEFFERY TEIGH

NOT many people think of taking a holiday on Lake Tanganyika. It is too remote, that longest lake in the world, running four hundred miles down the Great Rift of Africa, between the territory to which it gives its name and the Belgian Congo, until, in the south, it touches Northern Rhodesia. But there are worse ways of spending a few days if you have got a bit of local leave due to you. Or, if you are a traveller on a continental scale, you may like to try the lake as a link in a chain of communication which is weak and railwayless in this part of Africa. You can get from the north to South Africa this way, down the lake to Abercorn, and then eight hundred miles by road to railhead at Broken Hill. It is part, though an unusual part, of the Cape to Cairo route, and a lot of us found that very useful in the war.

You travel down the lake in a small steamer which not long ago looked as if it had reached an honourable end after a hard and varied life, but is now back in service, rejuvenated by many months' complete overhaul and repair.

Those of us who served in that part of Tanganyika missed the white, yacht-like ship

when she was withdrawn. The *Liemba* was very much part of our lives, whether we were stationed at her home port, Kigoma, or up in the wilder hills of Buha, from which we could see the ship in her landlocked basin far below. The small European community of Kigoma used to gather to watch the *Liemba* go out on her fortnightly sailings and to greet her on her return to harbour, as she came nosing round Elephant's Foot, the blunt headland where the German trenches of the first war are still visible.

She carried all sorts of people—missionaries going to their stations down the lake, administrative officers who would drop off quietly at some lonely place with their tents and stores for a foot safari inland until the ship came back again, planters having a rare holiday and seeing a bit of Africa they did not know before. And always there was a full complement of Africans, jostling, laughing, squatting to cook their food up forrard, women combing each other's hair, babies crying, old men blinking in the sun, and smart young government tax-clerks with their green cash-boxes and padlocked chains.

Oh yes, there was always a great send-off

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for the *Liemba*, and a lot of colour and quite a bit of romance disappeared when she was withdrawn—for good, I feared. But she's back again now on her well-known run, down this great coastline—past Ujiji, where Stanley met Livingstone, past Kungwe Mountain, to climb which is death, according to a local superstition which more than once has come sadly true, along the white beaches from which dugout canoes, unchanged since man first travelled on the lake, glide out to meet the steamer.

THE *Liemba* is well named, for that was the local name for Lake Tanganyika when Livingstone first reached it, but the ship has not always been so called. She started life as the *Goetzen*, and her continuance in service is all the more remarkable in view of her history.

She has been scuttled and twice raised, has been the property of three different nations, has fought naval engagements in one world war and carried troops in two. She has developed the commerce of little-known African tribes and has helped to spread the gospel. She has been the sole provider for lonely government officers and planters in places where no other communications exist. She has weathered shocking storms and has been reported sunk when towing a lighter full of petrol in heavy seas. But I suppose most people think of her with affection for a few days' rest snatched from a hard and busy life, when one sailed comfortably cabined and could put one's feet up on the rails for some idle, well-fed hours.

Thirty-four years ago Winston Churchill wrote a letter to the Governor of Tanganyika Territory about the *Liemba*, or, as she still was then, the *Goetzen*. He was at the time in brief charge of the Colonial Office and his letter conveyed authority for the attempted salvage of the scuttled ship, for scuttled she had been when the Germans had lost their hold on Tanganyika in the 1914-1918 war.

Scuttling was an ignominious end for a ship which had come to East Africa in a blaze of enterprise as part of the German scheme for expansion in the country. By 1910 the railway from the east coast towards Lake Tanganyika had progressed sufficiently far inland for the planners to think about further communications deep in the heart of Africa. It must have been an exciting and heady thought to any

colonial power, this opening-up of a line through Tanganyika until the huge sheet of water was reached, with endless possibilities for those who commanded the means to navigate it.

An order went home to Germany for a suitable ship, and by 1913 the work was in full swing. There was some argument as to whether oil or wood fuel should be used, but, bearing in mind the limitless supplies of timber along the lake shore, wood-burning engines were chosen. And so the ship remained until her last withdrawal for renovation. I can still hear the thump of great logs flung through a hatch into the engine-room by a happy African, and the blood-curdling prophecy of the European engineer as we passed a particularly crocodile-infested promontory, that one day a billet would go right through the old b—'s bottom!

The ship arrived in Tanganyika at the end of 1913; it was in pieces, of course, for reassembly on the lake. The railway was on the last lap of its eight-hundred-mile course to Kigoma, and the final work upon it coincided with great activity at Kigoma itself to turn the place into a small port for the new ship with the construction of a slipway, workshops, and quay. 1914 was occupied with putting the ship together again.

When she was complete—externally, at least, for within, even at her trials, she was deficient in electric, cooling, and lighting installations—she measured 220 feet in length and had a breadth of 33 feet. Her draught was 9 feet and her tonnage 793. She was insured for what now seems to be the ridiculously small sum of £25,000, although records show that her total value, complete at Kigoma, was £36,000.

AT last the *Goetzen* was ready for her trials, but the war had changed her programme. Instead now of being the property of the railway company, to trade and carry passengers, she was to be handed over as soon as possible to the German naval authorities to become part of a defence or striking force as might be necessary, and to transport troops.

There was some need for the Germans to wish to retain naval supremacy on Lake Tanganyika. Opposite them were the Belgians, not more than some thirty miles across the water, and they were busy building a rival to the *Goetzen*. Before her brief day

THE LITTLE SHIP ON LAKE TANGANYIKA

came to an end the little German ship was to carry out some raids against the Belgian shipyards.

In the meantime, there were her trials to be completed. They took place on 8th June 1915, the ship already having been fitted with gun platforms and armoured shields. The weather was calm and the run was short. On fresh, untrimmed wood the *Goetzen* made a speed of 7 knots, which with better timber rose to 8.25.

Fresh from her trials she set off on her maiden voyage. It must have been a hair-raising experience. Von Lettow was sending troops from railhead at Kigoma down the lake to Bismarckburg, now Kasanga, and there were 700 on board. Lake Tanganyika played up badly, and one of its worst storms blew up. The engines were not strong enough to drive the ship in that rough water. Both mechanical and hand steering broke down. The ship rolled more and more, and those on board were uncomfortably aware that the hatches did not close tightly, that bulkheads were quite inadequate to withstand an inrush of water, and that the ship had no double bottom. The *Goetzen* got out of control and was forced back towards Kigoma at a speed of some two knots. Luckily, she was well out in the lake and there was no immediate danger of her being driven ashore.

When conditions improved, the steering was repaired, only to break down later on in a renewal of the storm. On that first trip the *Goetzen* nearly went to the bottom some two miles out, and there she would have stayed, for Lake Tanganyika is not only the longest lake in the world—it is also one of the deepest. However, the weather calmed down again, once more the steering was mended and the ship continued on her course. On his return to Kigoma her commander put in a formidable list of alterations and additions to be made without delay. It is interesting to note that he commented unfavourably on the length of the bunks and the attacks of mosquitoes on people occupying them. When, on that first trip, anyone managed to get to bed is not easy to guess!

After this unpropitious start, however, the *Goetzen* got into her stride. Slow as she was, she could go much faster than the usual form of lake transport, the sailing dhows; and, furthermore, she could take nine hundred soldiers at a time.

But, while the *Goetzen* plodded up and down

the lake, made raids upon the Belgians, and was, at one time, involved in a battle with two tiny craft which had started their life as pleasure-boats at Teddington on Thames, things were not going so well for the Germans behind Kigoma. In 1916 the ship was bombed while in Kigoma harbour by Belgian aeroplanes and in July of that year the Allies cut the railway to the coast. Kigoma was no longer tenable and on 26th July 1916 the Germans got out. The *Goetzen*, pride of Lake Tanganyika and barely one year old, was taken hurriedly down the coast, filled with cement, and scuttled off the reedy delta of the Malagarasi River.

AND that might have been the end of the expense, the labour, and the hopes that had gone to the making of this little ship, if the Belgians had not raised her and towed her back to Kigoma. The Belgians administered this part of Tanganyika until 1921, but the *Goetzen* did not remain above water until then. Having reached Kigoma safely, she incontinently sank at her moorings, and there she stayed while the transfer of Kigoma to the British was going on, passing quietly into British possession with the water that covered her. Two months after the transfer was complete, in March 1921, Winston Churchill wrote his letter to the Governor, and another attempt at salvage began.

The total expenditure was estimated at £7500, and someone must have been hauled over the coals for such wild optimism. The whole operation, including £4000 to the Belgians for their preliminary attempt, which had at least brought the ship back to port, cost three times the estimate, but at last the *Goetzen* floated again, in March 1924, and was found to be in surprisingly good condition considering her eight years' submersion.

But her future was far from certain. The Belgians with their small fleet had got a monopoly of the lake's trade. It took a flash of British pride and a blunt query as to why there should not be a British steamer-service along a British coast and to Northern Rhodesia before permission to operate was given.

Money, as usual, was the stumbling-block, and, in all, the reconditioning cost nearly £30,000, only £6000 less than the total value placed by the Germans on the new ship. But the work went on. Divers were brought out

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from England, new dock-installations were built, and in 1927 everything was ready for the rechristening and the inauguration of the new service.

The name *Liemba* had already been chosen, not without arguments and other suggestions, including one Swahili word for which no satisfactory meaning has been discovered, and on 16th May 1927 the Governor of the territory performed the christening ceremony and sailed in the ship for her trials. It was a remarkable occasion, the band of the King's African Rifles having been brought to play from eight hundred miles away and a champagne lunch, the like of which has never been seen before or since, being served aboard to the guests. The *Liemba* just managed to beat her trials performance under German command by a quarter of a knot.

After that the little ship settled down to her regular routine. Skippers came and went, some with their wives, some bachelors, one with a dachshund which was happier aboard than ashore. It was a quiet life, but always flavoured with the chance of sudden storms bringing real danger and calling for first-quality seamanship. Regular as clockwork the ship sailed from its snug little bay below the hills, just before sunset, to come creeping back early in the morning ten days later. One saw it off and saw it home; sometimes one sailed oneself, but, if one stayed behind, the days the ship was away from port were uncommunicative, for the *Liemba* had no contact by wireless with the outside world.

Then the second war came, and the ship worked overtime. Once again its small decks were packed with troops, men for the armed forces, labour corps recruits, volunteers for essential production of sisal, rubber and wheat.

Many went up the coast as raw, near-naked savages, returning in due course as veterans in great khaki coats and hobnailed boots. There were refugees, too—Greeks and Poles from heaven knows what distant European villages, coming to safety and sufficiency in East Africa until they could go home.

The *Liemba* took it all in her stride, though those who ran her shook their heads as the ship's age began to show. Then, a quarter of a century after her renaming and return to service, she was withdrawn—not, as I feared, for breaking, but for a refit to give her further useful years.

It is pleasant to think of her sailing out of Kigoma once more, and turning south. Past Ujiji hidden in its mango-trees, down the lonely, eagle-haunted coast. She will anchor again at evening off Lagossa and her motor-boat will put out to fish, creeping past the white rocks where the cormorants stand crucified as they dry their wings and the pied kingfishers dive.

There will be sleek yellow-belly coming to the spinner, the best eating of all, and tiger-fish, fighting fiercely to the end. Down in the green deep water over the drowned stones the great *sangalla* will glide, contemptuous as always of any bait, and in the last light a herd of buck will steal timidly to the shore to drink.

As the boat goes back, the guinea-fowl will give their rattling cry in the dusk and the hills will grow dark. One by one the fires will glow, high, disembodied, emphasising the deepness of the night. The ship will be bright and civilised, but how great, how lonely will this lake still be even when another quarter-century's sailing has been done.

The Haar

*Seepan, creepan owre the hill
In yer drooket, sodden cleys,
Raitther wad I hae the rain
Wi' his honest, doonricht weys.*

*Seepan, creepan thru the wid,
Wi' yer clammy, cauldribe hans,
Better wad I hae the win
Whustlan thru the chimla-cans.*

*Seepan, creepan owre the muirs,
Ghaistly in yer swurlan cloak,
I frae ye wad rin awa,
Bit the snaw I wadnae jouk.*

*Gie me raitther storm an' sleet,
Gie me raitther hard hailstane,
Than that seepan, creepan haar,
Keekan thru the windae-pane.*

GERALDINE MITCHELL



Glasgow in a Gunyah

JACK PEARSON

THE men of the Kabi tribe called him Durramboi—the Kangaroo Rat, the cunning and the fast; but he belonged to Glasgow for all that—and when at last the time came he could not forget it.

Yet it had all been so long ago that, if his memory had failed him, perhaps he might have been excused. For over fifteen years he had not seen more than one white face or heard more than a few sentences of his native tongue, so that when he did try to speak he had to fight hard before he could find the words.

He had been a very young man, almost a boy, when they convicted him on a charge of petty theft and loaded him aboard a convict transport bound for New South Wales; and he had not been much older when, in Sydney, they hustled him aboard ship again and sent him sailing further north as one of an advance party organised to open a new settlement at a place they named Brisbane Town.

Captain Logan, of the 57th Regiment, had been chosen to take charge of the party, and it was a choice which every convict under his command found ample reason to regret. Captain Logan was a man of initiative, a man of energy, and a man of ideas; but he was by no means a man blessed with a gentle

temper, and, in Brisbane Town, he had had the widest scope for exercising all the former and losing whatever he possessed of the latter.

When Captain Logan appeared at what was to become Brisbane Town, there had been nothing there but a howling desolation of bush. He had subjected the scene to a swift scrutiny and had promptly taken steps to rectify matters. He had made a beginning by setting his convicts to erect a treadmill, cells, a storehouse, and barracks for prisoners—in that order. And, in case anyone's efforts should show any tendency to flag, he had also had the foresight to import a gentleman generally, and most unfavourably, known as Bumblefoot, who specialised in flogging and so could be depended upon to serve as a real incentive to laggards.

Bumblefoot had quickly opened up for business and soon he had had more work on his hands than he could conveniently handle—not the least of his labours being the Glasgow lad. Indeed, after a year or so, the Glasgow lad had been keeping Bumblefoot so constantly occupied that he seems to have begun to wonder whether he mightn't be making a nuisance of himself. A few more interviews with Bumblefoot had fully convinced him that he was. So, apparently having decided not to

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put Bumblefoot to any further trouble, he had seized the earliest opportunity of slipping away from the working-parties to dive into the undergrowth and disappear into the bush. The bush had closed behind him and had hidden him without trace.

That had been sometime in 1827. If the Glasgow lad had been patient enough to delay his departure for a few months longer, he might have been the one to discover Captain Logan lying murdered—whether by tribesmen or ticket-of-leavers no one will ever know for sure—in the same bush through which he passed.

But that was something which the Glasgow lad had no means of guessing as he plunged deeper into the trees. And, as the weeks had drifted into months without further sight or sound of him in Brisbane Town, he had been given up for lost and his name had been struck from the rolls. He had been remembered, if he was ever remembered at all, merely as just another convict whom the lash had flogged into such recklessness that, like so many more of his kind, he had fled from it to seek refuge in the Unknown, only to find instead a lingering death from exhaustion and hunger or a swifter one under the ambushed spears of the tribes. No one in his right senses in Brisbane Town could have even imagined that the Glasgow lad had done anything except died.

BUT the Glasgow lad had not died—at least, not quite. Somehow or other he had managed to cross the lofty range of the Bunya-Bunya hills, which barred his path to the north, and, feeding himself on stray lizards or wild plums, and unpredictably ignored by the tribes, he had struggled further and further on through the bush. He had travelled more than 200 miles before his strength finally gave out. Then, sprawling under a gum-tree, he had been waiting for death, when a score or so of spearsmen had suddenly come skulking round him from out of the trees.

Too weak even to pretend to resist, the Glasgow lad had gazed up at the jabbering spearsmen as they stood above him, debating hotly among themselves whether it was worth their effort to slay one who so obviously had already such a short time left to live. But the spearsmen had still not reached a decision when a wizened, old black gin had thrust herself through their ranks and, falling on

the Glasgow lad's body, had clasped her skinny arms about his neck and had hailed him as Durramboi, her lost son, now come back again from the dead.

The spearsmen had not attempted to contradict her, for they, too, believed that when one of their fellow-clansmen had to climb over the bridge which Dhakkan, the Rainbow Serpent, built with his many-coloured coils across the sky into the Land of Ghosts their brother shed his skin like a snake and stepped out of it as white and fair as the lad who lay at their feet. They had also recognised the Glasgow lad as Durramboi-Come-Back and, lifting him, they had carried him with them to their camping-place. There, they had stretched him in the shelter of one of their crazy bark gunyahs and had slowly nursed him back to health.

It had been long before the Glasgow lad recovered his old strength, but when at last he had begun to live again he had taken up Durramboi's place in the tribe. The tribesmen had made him one of themselves. They had taken him deep into the secret recesses of the bush and had initiated him as a warrior with the sacred rites which no female eyes may see, carving his body with tribal scars and swinging the bull-roarer loud in the night to frighten all women away. They had given him a totem and a wife and had built him a gunyah for his own, piling the strips of bark against the slender uprights as the only protection they ever sought against sun or wind or rain. And, little by little, they had taught him to speak the same language as themselves.

So the Glasgow lad had become one of the Dauwa-burra—one of the Men of the Dead Trees. With them he had made his home on the banks of the Queensland river which is now called Mary, but which they knew as Mari-ba-coola, the Place Where the Kangaroos Come to Drink. There he had sung and danced with them in their corroborees; there he had learned to wield the spear and the boomerang, with which spears are thrown, and the boomerang as well; and there, after his fashion, he had been happy again.

When he had become skilled in the use of his weapons, he had gone out with the other clansmen to hunt and to raid. He had joined with them to chase the opossum and the emu, the wallaby and the dingo pack; and, with them, he had often met the other clans of the Kabi tribe when they went to attack the Kongoluthar, the great enemy confederation

GLASGOW IN A GUNYAH

who neighboured them still further to the north. As year had followed year, he had grown more apt and more sure with the weapons he had been given, until at last all men had taken note of it and had begun to sing in praise of this Great Kangaroo Rat, the Durramboi, who was so cunning and so swift to kill.

BUT there had been once in every year when the Glasgow lad had ceased to hunt and to kill. That was when he had journeyed with the rest of the Dauwa-burra far to the south into the Bunya-Bunya hills, where the tribes for hundreds of miles around were gathering to celebrate the annual kippur-making—the first initiation of the young men—and to eat together at the annual feast of the bunya-nuts. At these meetings all talk of feuds and killings was taboo, so that for a short while the clans could sit side by side in peace and find that they were friends.

It had been at one of these meetings that the Glasgow lad had been so unexpectedly reminded of the land that was slipping so far and so fast from his mind. While the bull-roarers boomed and the camp-fires blazed, he had seen a face which it seemed that he somehow dimly remembered. And then suddenly he had remembered. It had been the face of James Bracefield, one time of London and more lately than that a convict with the Glasgow lad in Brisbane Town.

For a moment the Glasgow lad had feared that he was gazing at a ghost; but when he had run forward and clutched at its hand, it had not been a ghost—it had been flesh and blood like himself. Together beside the camp-fire they had struggled to recall words already half-forgotten, so that their stories might be told. But, in most of what mattered, the tale which Bracefield had had to tell might have been the Glasgow lad's own.

Like the Glasgow lad, Bracefield had also fled from Brisbane Town to the insecure shelter of the bush; like the Glasgow lad, he, too, had been found and claimed as one climbed back again across Dhakkan's bridge; and, like the Glasgow lad still, he now lived as a blood-brother with his clan of the Yilam-burra—the People of the Yellow Snake.

There had been only one difference. Unlike the Glasgow lad, Bracefield had had no cunning with the boomerang and no skill with the spear. Instead, when his clan went out to

war, he had remained behind to fashion them new corroborees and to make for them new songs. When they had danced his corroborees and heard his songs sung, the clansmen had quickly made up their minds. They had changed his name to Wandi, the Great Talker, because they had found that his words were good.

The Glasgow lad and Bracefield had sat talking far into the night; but the next day the kippur-making had come to an end; the clans had taken up their feuds again and turned their steps for home; and the Glasgow lad and Bracefield had each gone their separate ways with them.

After that the Glasgow lad had seen Bracefield only once a year at each kippur-making, for to have attempted to cross the tribal boundaries at any other time would have meant death. For the rest of the year he had lived as he had grown accustomed to live with his clan and any memories he may have had of Glasgow had slipped further and further away. Month after month the years had piled up into years, until at last fifteen of them had been spent and there had come a day when a runner had panted into the camping-place of the Dauwa-burra with the message-stick that gave him safe-conduct clenched in his hand. It was then May 1842.

THE messenger brought strange tidings for the clansmen to hear, and he bade them gather fast with the other clans, for danger was drawing near. Sailing closer and closer to them up the waters of Mari-ba-coola, there was coming a canoe with wings. And the canoe was bringing with it what the tribes had always feared—the white invaders, the makrommi, from the other side of the Bunya-Bunya hills.

The clans had gathered swiftly behind the narrow ridge of rock which almost bars the Mary River close to where the little township of Tiaro now stands. The Glasgow lad was watching from ambush with them there when the canoe with wings swung round the bend, and he must have gaped to see that Wandi, the Great Talker, was standing in its bows.

But Wandi was not alone. Besides the Great Talker, the Glasgow lad could count eleven other men in the boat. Two, he could see from their tribal scars, were warriors of the Minyun, the tribe that had its camping-place not far from Brisbane Town. Five more

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—four of them tugging at the oars and the fifth squatted at the tiller in the stern-sheets—wore the convict's broad-arrow on their canvas jackets. It was the other four, however, who held the Glasgow lad's gaze. The first was balancing straddle-legged in the boat, with a shotgun in the crook of his arm; the second crouched woebegone on the thwarts, with a cloth bound about his head; the third's flowing brown beard waved in the breeze; and the fourth was a sturdy, heavy-shouldered man with a red, sun-burned face.

There was no one to tell the Glasgow lad that he was staring at the Honourable W. Wrottesley, freshly arrived from England in search of excitement, and soon to be provided with some; the disillusioned Henry Stuart Russell, at present suffering a slight spasm of sunstroke; former Royal Naval Captain Joliffe, who had come along just for the ride; and the organiser of the expedition himself, one Andrew Petrie, a very pawky Scot indeed.

He had even less means of guessing that, a few weeks before, they had all set out from Brisbane Town together in a gig to discover, if they could, the real truth about the unknown rivers which they had heard flowed through the mangrove-swamps to the north. They had reached the stream named Maroochy Doro, the Singing Sands, and had turned aside to explore it, when Wandí, the Great Talker, had suddenly come racing out of the sand-dunes and had almost thrown himself into their arms. It had been Wandí, in the great talk he had with them, who had told them of this other river, Mari-ba-coola, and who had now led them to it.

The Glasgow lad saw Wandí fling up his arm and, as the four convicts ceased to row, the gig drifted broadside on to the ridge of rock as if against a half-submerged wharf.

The clans around the Glasgow lad stirred and, here and there from amongst them, the bolder warriors began to skirmish cautiously nearer to the rocks, dragging their spears between their toes through the lank grass, as they always did when they wished to attack unawares. But the Glasgow lad's spear was poised ready to cast as he skirmished forward with them.

The gig touched the ridge of rock and, springing from it, Wandí and the two Minyun warriors commenced to wade, ankle-deep, to the shore. As he reached the river-bank, Wandí, the Great Talker, spread his arms wide and spoke. He cried to the clans that

he was '*nolla kalangur*'—that his belly felt good and was full of cheer, for he came not in war but in peace and bearing gifts of blankets and of food, and perhaps even of an axe or two, all of which would be theirs if they would only consent to lay aside their spears; and, crying to them, he slowly edged further and further towards the scrub in which they hid.

But, as he did, the Glasgow lad, his naked body painted for war and his spear quivering to kill, leaped from the bushes and met Wandí face to face. His voice shrilled up into his war-chant, and the two Minyun warriors spun on their heels, to splash frantically along the ridge of rock into the gig. The Glasgow lad's war-chant broke off into a splutter of screaming words as he accused Wandí of trying to buy his own freedom by selling him back into chains.

It was not for nothing, however, that Wandí had won the name of the Great Talker among the clans. He stretched out his empty hands and his voice crooned soothingly as he reasoned with the Glasgow lad, repeating again and again that he brought freedom, not chains; that he was the friend of Durramboi and that his friends were Durramboi's friends; that they asked nothing of Durramboi except that he should trust them and come back. As he spoke, the Glasgow lad's spear ceased slowly to quiver and his screaming words died gradually away. For a moment, he stood silent; then, as the Great Talker took another step towards him, he hurled his spear to the ground and dashed past Wandí on to the ridge of rock.

For what seemed to be minutes, he battled with himself to find the words for which he had long since stopped thinking that he would ever have any need. '*Me Jem Davis*,' he managed to gasp at last; but his voice faltered once more and again he was dumb. '*Of Glasgow*,' he added with an abrupt burst, and dived into the river to swim to the gig.

THERE is little left to be told. Listening to the honeyed words of Wandí, the clans of the Kabi laid down their spears and, in ones and twos, came out of the scrub to gather on the river-bank. The Glasgow lad crouched, watching them gather there; then, suddenly, he sprang to his feet in the gig and also began to speak. When they heard what he had to say to them, a forlorn ululuu droned up from the ranks of his clan and, as

Andrew Petrie wrote in his journal, 'men and women both burst into tears that he should leave them, for they missed him very much.'

They were still wailing the next morning when the gig—now with thirteen passengers and a watch that had once belonged to some murdered shepherd—turned back towards the sea. Andrew Petrie, and, no doubt, the Glasgow lad as well, could never forget the lithe, young woman, bronze-bright in the sunlight, who stood on the ridge of rock and beat her breasts, singing for Durramboi as women sing for the dead, while she watched them go.

As the gig swung round the bend, Andrew Petrie moved across to sit beside the Glasgow lad on the thwarts and talk to him. At the sound of the broad, Scots accent—Andrew Petrie never tired of telling—a light seemed to flash in the Glasgow lad's eyes before he buried his face in his hands and began to weep.

Back in Brisbane Town once more, they found the Government disposed to be unhabitually tolerant. The Moreton Bay Penal Settlement was soon to be closed, so there seemed to be no especial point in returning either Bracefield or the Glasgow lad to the cells. Instead, they were both granted tickets-of-leave. But that was as far as Government tolerance seemed able to stretch without snapping. When the Glasgow lad showed an inclination to hint that it might be rather

pleasant to visit Glasgow again, the answer was a blank 'No.'

Together Bracefield and he settled down to wait out the rest of their lives in Brisbane Town. Bracefield's wait was the shorter. Within a few months a falling pine-tree had silenced the Great Talker for ever, and the Glasgow lad was alone once more. On this occasion, however, it was not for so long. He was still the Glasgow lad. In less than a year he had married and was briskly prospering in a blacksmithing business.

He continued to blacksmith and to prosper for many years thereafter. But, whatever else the years gave him, they did not seem able to give him back his tongue. To the end he remained a man of few words, and those terse. So, whenever he was cross-questioned for details of his experiences among the Kabi, he contented himself with one unvarying response. 'If you want to know about the blacks,' he would say, 'go and take your clothes off and live with them as I did.'

He was still declining to be any more expansive when he died at a ripe old age. He had always refused to be photographed and, to-day, all that remains of him is a small oil-painting made by Oscar Fristrom after his death. Time has darkened the daub almost beyond redemption—but you can still see the tribal scars carved deep on his dour Scots face.

Fish as Pets

JESSIE LONG

SOCIAL life has taken many forms throughout the centuries, and the latest craze of fish-keeping is no exception. The ardent enthusiast has no need to go round to the local in the evening because he is bored at home: if he wants to go out, he can go round to old Charlie's or Bill's to see his fish.

By no means a new hobby, the present craze

for keeping goldfish and their cousins, the tropical fish, as pets has exceeded the darts craze of the years just before the War. All over the country aquariums are proving a fascinating, decorative, and, in many cases, remunerative hobby. Tropical aquariums are firmly established decorations in the foyers of cinemas and hotels.

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A native of the Chinese freshwater rivers, the goldfish is a greenish-bronze in its wild state. The Chinese, who noticed mutants, or sports, golden in colour now and again, were quick to grasp their possibilities, and before the end of the Sung dynasty (960-1126) goldfish were being bred on a commercial scale in Peking. Some sources attribute goldfish to the Japanese, but in fact goldfish were not introduced into Japan until the early 16th century. They did not reach Europe till the 18th century, and quickly gained immense popularity over here due to their bright appearance and hardness.

Selective breeding has gone on through the centuries, and some bizarre forms have been reproduced. Fish with protruding eyes, egg-shaped bodies, transparent scales, and brilliant colours, or raspberry-like growths of the head are among some of the popular forms seen to-day.

One of the first tropical fish to be introduced into Europe was the paradise-fish from Indo-China. Other tropicals were imported from Siam, India, the Malay States, Brazil, Mexico, and the West Indies. The trade was brought to a standstill during the War, but gradually the fancy is getting on its feet again. Generally speaking, more tropical fish can be kept in a tank than goldfish, as they are much smaller.

THE main advantage of keeping fish is that they require very little attention, apart from daily feeding, and even then, should the owner be away for a day or two, no harm will befall. Fish can, too, be confined to one place without involving cruelty. Further, there is no fear of their soiling the carpet, making unpleasant noises or smells, or escaping the minute a door is opened.

Rectangular tanks made of plate-glass with a metal frame, the length of the tank being twice the width and height, are the most suitable, as they give an undistorted view of the contents. A glass lid raised on corks should be placed on top to keep out dust, and, with tropicals, to keep them from jumping out of the tank.

The heating arrangements of a tropical tank do not present any great difficulty. The temperature should be maintained at about 75° Fahr., although the majority of fish do not object to the temperature dropping a little below normal.

Enthusiasts keep their fish in conditions as

near their natural element as possible, with stones and waving water-weeds, which afford restful shelter, but, unfortunately, the public in general are under the impression that a glass-bowl and a few crumbs or ants'-eggs are all that is required. Many do not even think it necessary to feed their fish at all, being under the delusion that they can find nourishment in the water. In consequence, the fish soon die.

Filling the bowl to the neck with water, and thus restricting air-supply, is another mistaken idea. If several fish are kept in this manner, they will quickly die of suffocation, for air is as necessary to fish life as it is to human life. With a well-set-up tank of adequate size the fish derive the oxygen from two sources. It is absorbed from the surface of the tank and from the plants which grow in the water. By this it will be seen that the bigger the surface-area the more fish can be kept. Each inch-long fish, excluding the tail, requires a gallon of water; therefore it is easily appreciated why so many fish kept in round bowls, which hold perhaps half-a-gallon of water, are short-lived.

Water-weeds are necessary if the tank is to be a well-balanced one. In the daytime the weeds give off oxygen, which, dissolving in the water, is available to the fish; the fish, on their part, give off carbon dioxide, which serves to nourish the plants.

Fish are omnivorous and have excellent appetites. The vegetable content is supplied by the aquatic plants growing in the tank. For the rest of their diet the fish have to rely on the aquarist's understanding of their need. Water-fleas, white worms, bloodworms, and chopped-up earthworms are the main forms of live food fed to fish these days, though shredded raw beef or hard-boiled egg-yolks can be given. Earthworms are probably the best live food fish can have, since they stimulate spawning and act as a mild laxative.

Various artificial foods can be obtained from dealers when natural live foods are not available, but care must be exercised when using these. If too much is given, the uneaten food will sink and pollute the water. Usually these prepared foods are well-balanced, but they should be soaked in water for a while before feeding to the fish, otherwise they tend to swell in the stomach when eaten, causing constipation.

Fish will not grow and thrive as well on artificial foods, however, as on the more

DRAINING THE HIGH FELS

natural foods. They should not be overfed. The amateur, not wanting his charges to starve to death, tends to give them more and more food, as they always appear to be hungry, with the result that the water soon becomes polluted. No more food than can be eaten within ten minutes should be given. One feed a day in summer and once every second day in winter is sufficient, the best time being round about midday.

PROVIDED healthy fish are bought and elementary care taken, the risk of diseases is small, but overcrowding, overfeeding resulting in constipation, or sudden changes in temperature causing chills will lower the fish's resistance to any disease such as white spot or fungus present in the tank.

A net should be used when moving fish from one tank to another, for the fish are covered with a mucous-like substance and, should this be rubbed off with careless handling, the fish will be more vulnerable to fungus. Cures can be effected, but unless the amateur is well-versed in the treatment of these diseases it is wisest to call in an expert ichthyologist.

An upright dorsal fin is a sure sign of a healthy fish, except, of course, where a fish has a naturally drooping fin.

The sex of goldfish is difficult to determine, and it is only at spawning-time that one can be certain. The abdomen of the female will become rounded as the ovary fills with eggs, while whitish tubercles develop on the head and gill-covers of the male. Also the male will drive the female vigorously during the day. Sexing of tropicals is easier in many cases. Some species are known as live-bearers—that is, they give birth to fish, while with the egg-laying varieties the male can be recognised by its brighter colouring.

Parents should be removed from the tank once spawning is over, otherwise they will eat the eggs with great relish. The average-sized female will deposit about a thousand eggs at the first spawning, but not so many at future spawnings.

Aquarium Societies exist in most towns, and the amateur is well advised to join one, for he can rest assured that any help or advice he may need in the management of his tank will be willingly and generously given by enthusiasts.

Draining the High Fells

HERBERT LAMBERT

HERE and there in the lowlands of Yorkshire are amateurs who carefully measure and record the local rainfall. These records show a great variation from valley to valley and are no guide whatsoever to rainfall on the surrounding heights. Many times the village in the valley basks in sunshine while thick moisture-laden clouds hide the hilltops. Up there the rainfall is considerable. The only rough guide as to the amount is the rise and fall of the lowland stream. Hence an unusually high and recurring stream-level

suggests unduly heavy rainfall on the hilltops.

During the latter months of 1951 there was rain, snow, and more rain—torrents on the hillsides and floods in the valleys. Certainly the extent of the floods indicated very heavy rainfall on the hills. There was, however, another factor to consider before the floods could be taken as evidence of record rainfall for the period in question, or, indeed, any similar period over the last few years.

The factor is unknown, perhaps, to those who have not recently tramped the high fells,

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and quite possibly it may have been overlooked by some who have. Briefly, it is the country-wide draining, or as we say locally, gripping, of all upland areas where the treatment has been thought desirable. The account that follows refers to such activity in north-west Yorkshire, but may well be regarded as descriptive of all areas where similar conditions prevail.

THE Pennine Range consists mainly of limestone, a porous rock, through which water seeps to the non-porous Silurian layer. Here it collects and emerges as a spring at the foot of the limestone cliff. Such slopes have a perfect natural drainage. They are the first to suffer in periods of drought. In the higher Pennines a layer of yoredales, topped by millstone grit, surmounts the limestone. These two rocks are impervious, but their steep slopes ensure good drainage. The natural watercourses on these slopes disappear when they reach the porous limestone. The water pours into the vertical shafts known as pot-holes, follows an underground course, and emerges as do the springs.

Above and below a certain line, or level, there is perfect natural drainage. This line is where the non-porous rock meets the porous limestone—a comparatively level stretch immediately below the higher slopes, the level where pot-holes and sink-holes abound. It is on this area that water collects; here, draining is sorely needed.

The water-collecting areas are a mixture of heather, rough grass, rushes, and sphagnum moss. They vary from gently undulating patches to vast rolling moors. The haunts of sheep and grouse, they are the concern of farmer and sportsman. Through the farmer they come within the scope of the Ministry of Agriculture.

It was the Ministry of Agriculture who decided that these fells could be treated to benefit the nation, through the hill-farmer. Gripping, it was thought, would discourage the spread of moss and rush bogs. These envelope and stifle the growth of heather and grass, thus reducing the grazing acreage and the number of sheep such areas can carry.

Farmer, sportsman, and fell-lover welcomed such a decision. All were perturbed by the wetness of the areas and the consequent spread of sphagnum moss and rushes; these thrive in exceptionally wet places, to

the exclusion of all else, forming floating bogs treacherous to sheep and humans alike. Such patches afford no grazing whatsoever for sheep and are suspected of being a source of disease to grouse.

Previous attempts to drain wet fell areas amounted to what little an odd gamekeeper or labourer could achieve with a trenching-spade. This was too slow and, of late, too costly to be of much practical benefit. Considerable effort was needed to keep the trenches, not to speak of the natural drains, open, let alone dig more. During the war the draining was almost wholly neglected. It was during the post-war years that the Ministry put their scheme into operation.

The scheme entailed the gripping of ill-drained upland areas, and was extended, where desirable, to include high wet pastureland. The gripping was done by mechanical means. Of the initial cost, 50 per cent was borne under the Ministry's state-aided scheme. The cost was not heavy—about 3s. per square chain, with approximately 10 square chains per acre. The scheme was not made compulsory. Many landowners, or in some cases tenants, took advantage of it, if only in the way of experiment.

During the years following the war, fell-walkers may well have been startled by the roar of a tractor engine. They would certainly notice the spreading network of vicious black lines cutting the gentle folds at all angles. Fortunately the lines are now not so obvious and no longer mar the view. The peat has dried out and changed to a light brown.

The work was done by a trencher, pulled usually by a tracked machine. The trencher—formed of a large ploughshare, immediately preceded by two cutting-discs—made a furrow roughly 18 inches across and of a similar depth. The excavated earth was deposited, upside down, in one complete roll about two feet from the furrow. The peat presented little difficulty to the share, but made occasional heavy going for the tractor.

The furrows radiate from the pot-holes, sink-holes, and natural drains. In places, there are parallel furrows every 10 yards or so, running up or across the slope. Some are nearly a mile in length, excluding the branch and sub-branch lines. Their concentration and direction depend on the nature of the land. There is no piping as in lowland draining.

DRAINING THE HIGH FELLS

ON the whole it appears that there has been some definite improvement from the trenching. One criticism is that the grips could have been planned to greater advantage. In fact, some comparatively dry heather slopes should never have been touched; gripping runs off the water so essential to the heather's survival. There was insufficient concentration on the semi-bog patches and, indeed, these are little altered. True, the equipment used could not operate satisfactorily under such conditions. It is the wet, reasonably firm moorland and pastureland that has benefited from the operation.

Another criticism is that the furrows are an added danger to sheep. Sheep, like human beings, find that walking along the raised excavated earth facilitates progress on the heather slopes, but odd sheep do roll into the furrows on their backs and meet a lingering end. These, amongst many things, fill and block the furrows.

Already, within no more than a few years, the neat furrows are mostly shapeless, shrunk channels. Where they pass through sphagnum moss, the moss has sunk in and joined. Rushes and a particularly virile kind of red grass have grown in the channels. Heather sprigs hang in and catch the drift. Sods and excavated earth are accidentally rolled in.

A good flow of water in some channels has actually deepened the furrows. In these, barriers of stone have formed. In others, well-preserved lumps of rowan wood have piled up. The share has passed through and revealed many tree-stumps, remains of a one-time forest. Often large fixed rocks stand across the furrows; a channel was not made to bypass them.

All these cause blockages which divert the water on to the moor, thus defeating the object of gripping. To be effective, therefore, the furrows must be kept open. This is no easy task. To walk them for this purpose is a tiring job. To redig lengths of collapsed furrows by hand is out of the question. There is neither the labour nor the capital available. To maintain the efficiency of the operation many areas will probably need periodical mechanical re-furrowing. It appears that, at the most, gripping can only discourage sodden ground and the spread of bogs. Any furrow reopening would be best confined to such areas, and the furrows on the drier heather slopes left to fill themselves in. As for the established bogs, considerably deep and lengthy channels would be necessary to drain them off.

The nature of these peaty areas is soft and resilient. Such a surface absorbs and holds water like a sponge. Before gripping, the heavy rains were absorbed and seeped away gradually over a period of several days, whereas now the holding capacity of these areas is greatly impaired.

A continued heavy downpour fills the furrows with water. All these radiating furrows bring down hitherto absorbed water, to swell the torrents pouring down the pot-holes. Hence the volume of water rushing to the valley immediately after a downpour is considerably increased. This accounts for the sudden rise to a higher level of the valley streams and rivers, or, where their banks overflow, for the more extensive flooding. The widespread recurring floods of recent years are not, then, evidence of excessive rainfall. The draining of the upper fells is the explanation.

Martha

*Why so hurried, Martha mine?
Stars and snow make heady wine:
Let us quaff it with a smile,
Truants for a magic while.*

*Come, forget it's half-past five:
Clocks are dead; but we're alive.
Beauty's knocking at the gate—
Surely market-day can wait?*

CHARLES KELLIE.



The Curious Crowning

ALUN LLEWELLYN

IT was in the time (said the Antiquarian) of the ancient days when the world was not so well-ordered as it might be and this country had not only to look after itself but had also to see to it that Europe, by which I mean what was left of the law of Rome, could have some sort of refuge of order and decency within these shores. Fifteen hundred years ago it was, and not so far different from the present day that we need consider progress much more than a going round in circles.

The Crown of London was in dispute between those who fought for the old tradition of things and those who had the idea that men could do without the memories of their fathers. It is a time wrapped in darkness and confusion. But one thing is clear—that after such men as Constantine the Great or Maximus had led the legions of Britain to bring rule again into Gaul and Spain and Italy, it behoved Britons themselves at last to fall back and lay their lines of defence between the Thames, the Severn, and the Dee. So the Crown of London fell to be guarded by those who dwelt in this West Country, which I maintain is where the heart of Britain most deeply beats; and the key to the West was our own Welsh Dyfi that flows through the long valley and the low marsh of birds to the sands of the estuary of the sea.

It was there that Maglocunos, King of the Britons in his day, came with his champions from the North and called upon the sea to recognise and proclaim his authority, a ceremony which, as you may recollect, one Knut of the Danes tried to imitate centuries after, but failed, for the sea knows, as the seasons and the wild things know, in whom the spirit of the land resides, and no man or woman alien to the ancient breed can command its loyalty.

But Maglocunos, though he held the heathen at bay and wore in triumph the three plume-feathers and flew the dragon-standard, things that were symbols of the sovereignty of Rome, had to die; and his inheritance died, too, among the swords of his successors and evil days came to the land.

NOW, in the destruction of the times, it was necessary to find again someone to be, as the famous Arthur had been not long before, emperor of the Britons and defender of the Crown of London—a difficult task for any to carry out at the best of times, and more so then, for when fortune is good, men's minds are asleep, and when days are distracted, so is their counsel.

Not that there wanted claimants. First

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came Paternus with his heavy-armoured horsemen who had wrought havoc against the Saxons of the plain of England and the wild Irish of the sea; and by right of the strength of arm he demanded the kingship of all the Britons. And secondly came Ambrosius, an old man of craft and learning who had counselled many kings and now counselled many noblemen against the pretensions of Paternus. The one was confident of saving Britain by weapons, the other by cunning. And to the assembly of the people at the sea-mouth of Dyfi they came, both, to have election decided between them.

As it happened, the place of council was close to the dwelling of Taliesin, the great bard of his time, who had lived longer than most men and had a reputation for knowing more than wisdom and having powers greater than sword could command. And rather than have the matter fought out in blood, to him went Paternus and Ambrosius together that he might settle it.

'It is highly proper that you should come to me,' said Taliesin. 'It is never amiss that men of affairs should come for guidance to men of letters.'

'I doubt it,' said Paternus, loosening his sword a little in its sheath. 'But I am convinced you will see reason.'

'I doubt it as much,' smiled Ambrosius, smoothing his beard. 'But I am convinced you will appreciate the strength of my support.'

'I see both sides equally well,' reflected Taliesin. 'That is the usual difficulty of men of letters. It is a question whether the sword shall govern reason or reason the sword.'

'I have the better reasons,' said the soldier.

'I have the sharper swords,' said the sage.

'I must take advice,' considered Taliesin after a while. 'I have lived a long time and seen a number of things come and go. But there is one older than I and who has studied life nearer its source.'

'Who is that?' they asked.

'It is the Stag of the Dark Wood,' the bard answered. 'You will recall him, since he has been quoted in many triads and other repositories of learning.'

'Quite so,' the other two agreed. 'Indeed he has a fine oracular repute. By all means take advice from this learned animal.' Nor was this as strange to them as it may seem to you, because in that time conversation with beasts was not infrequent, as the works of many a poet like Taliesin will show.

So Taliesin took staff and scrip and girded up his robe and went into the Dark Wood.

AT last Taliesin found the Stag, his years manifest in the great branching of his tines. The bard passed the time of day a little and then spoke of the great affairs of state which brought him.

'I know,' said the Stag, putting his nose to a piece of moss doubtfully, 'for Ambrosius came to me yesterday offering handfuls of sweet fodder; but I did not care for the halter he held behind his back. And Paternus came, too; but I did not care for the hounds he brought with him.'

'O subtle Stag!' exclaimed Taliesin. 'Then you cannot advise me?'

'I think little of either of them,' the Stag admitted. 'But then I am young and foolish, having lived only a few hundreds of years. I will take you to the Salmon of the Long River, for his years are numbered in thousands, and before land was, there was water.'

Taliesin had heard of this Salmon from the ancient books of Wales and, apart from the need to solve his political problems, he could not remember that he had ever yet held conversation with a fish. So he gladly accepted the Stag's offer. And after a day's travel they found the Salmon meditating in a clear deep pool of the Long River that rises none knows where and falls in seas no man has ever seen.

'I know,' said the Salmon when they told him their mission. 'And if you had not had the Stag with you, Taliesin, I would have stayed quiet under my stone, for Ambrosius came for me yesterday with a net and then Paternus with a spear; and I like neither of them.'

'O percipient fish!' cried Taliesin. 'But if land and water fail me, where can I go to seek good counsel?'

'There is the air,' said the Salmon. 'Follow the banks of this river and I will guide the pair of you to the Owl of the Highest Tree, for the sky watched when the earth rose from the sea and when the sea first formed from vapour. He has seen all things and his judgment is the precedent of all wisdom.'

'In my time,' reflected Taliesin, 'I have talked with a number of owls, but they were not all feathered. I will gladly go with you.'

And with the Stag as his guard and the Salmon as his guide he travelled for a day and a night and at length found the Owl, the

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wisest of fowl, in the tallest of tall trees, plunged in thought with his beak upon his breast.

'You need not tell me,' observed the Owl before any of them could speak. 'Ambrosius was here yesterday showing me a lure and then Paternus who used arrows. Neither was successful, as you can see, and my opinion of each of the two is far from favourable.'

At which Taliesin sat himself on the ground and complained. 'I might as well have left them to do this journey for themselves,' said he. 'Did they not say they would rely on the advice I brought them?'

'You are speaking of politicians,' said the Owl. 'Do they ever follow even their own advice?'

'Nevertheless,' suggested the Stag, 'our friend must go back with something to say.'

'You are a mere juvenile,' said the Salmon. 'The rule of wisdom is to say nothing and to be sure the bait has no hook in it.'

'Juvenile yourself,' answered the Owl. 'I have sat here since this tree was an acorn—and now it is the tallest tree in the world. And what I have learnt is that there is no such thing as wisdom.'

'You are right,' Taliesin cried. 'And there is little wisdom in me to come seeking the choice of a king upon the advice of fur and fish and fowl.'

'You are speaking of the representatives of the elements,' the Owl reproved him, 'and you should therefore speak with more respect.'

'There is only fire left,' said Taliesin.

'Fire,' said the Owl, 'is to be avoided at all costs. It is less one of the elements than the destruction of all of them. If you have learnt nothing else from politics, you should have learnt that.' And the Stag and the Salmon nodded.

'Then what am I to do?' asked the bard.

The Owl swelled out his feathers. 'I have said there is no wisdom. You have none, for your wisdom acknowledges only strength or subtlety. Paternus is strength and Ambrosius subtlety. Yet neither of them could convince the Stag, the Salmon, or me. Why not try something that is not wisdom?'

'I do not understand,' said Taliesin.

'Naturally,' answered the Owl. 'Come with me.' And with that he spread his wings and flew ponderously; and the Stag took Taliesin on his shoulders and the Salmon went by ways of his own till they came to a hermitage in the depths of the forests.

THE hermit was a youngish man, who had heard nothing of Paternus or Ambrosius, or even of Taliesin, for, as he was careful to explain, there was no point in being a hermit unless one avoided all concern with people of that sort. But he welcomed the Owl and the Stag and the Salmon, and at the Owl's request he called for the child he had in his guardianship.

'Here,' said the Owl, 'is the young Sextilius, great-grandnephew of Maglocunos. A provident mother with an eye to the habits of statesmen has hidden him in this place out of harm's way. The rest, Taliesin, I leave to you.'

The boy was no more than ten years old and, having had for so long a time no other intimate than the hermit, he had none of the elements of worldly instruction about him. But he laughed at the Owl, who blushed but took it in good part, and wondered at the strange scales of the Salmon, and put out his hand and touched the soft nose of the Stag. And his eye was as dark and tender as the Stag's, and the Salmon lay willingly in the water to be tickled, and the Owl, despite a certain embarrassment, suffered his feathers to be stroked.

'This is innocence,' said the Owl. 'We are wise enough to understand it. Can you say as much for men?'

'No,' said Taliesin. 'It will not do.'

'I have lived long enough,' said the Owl, 'to know that what won't do, does.'

'If we all come with you,' said the Stag, 'the people may be impressed by such a collection of oracles.'

So Taliesin, doubting it gravely, rode back upon the Stag with the child in his arms, and the Owl and the Salmon made their ways severally. And they came to the estuary where the Dyfi winds through the great marsh to the sea, and there the council of the people awaited them.

'Which of us do you choose?' asked Paternus and Ambrosius together.

'The choice is not mine,' said Taliesin tactfully. 'It is well known that the king to be must undergo the trial of the sea and sit on his throne between the high tide and the low and let the things of nature acknowledge him.'

'Whom have you there?' asked Paternus, frowning.

'It is the child Sextilius, great-grand-nephew of Maglocunos.'

'A boy!' sneered Ambrosius. 'What counsel can he give to men?'

'Tell him,' said the Stag, nudging Taliesin, 'that men are wisest when they seek simplicity.'

'A child!' laughed Paternus. 'What can he know of war?'

'Tell him,' said the Salmon, putting his head out of the sea, 'that men die willingly only for their own future—and that a child is the future.'

'We are here to choose a king!' shouted Paternus and Ambrosius in contempt at the crowd. 'What strength has this Sextilius in arm or head to govern you?'

'Tell them,' hooted the Owl, spreading his wings eloquently, 'that a monarch is he who touches the heart and no other.'

And at that the crowd shouted and Taliesin was made bold. And even Paternus and Ambrosius were a little impressed by the

arguments of the Stag and the Salmon and the Owl.

So the trial was made. And Paternus sat upon the throne and called upon the sea to obey him, brandishing his sword and shield. But the sea rose and dashed him from his place.

Then Ambrosius took his seat, having accepted the second turn as by his calculations the tide would then begin to change. But the Salmon leapt in the sea and the breakers took Ambrosius and the throne and cast them high up on the shore and overturned them both.

Then the Stag took the child on his shoulders and came to the royal seat and the Owl sat at his side and the Salmon sank in the water. And the waves drew back and bowed low upon the sand before Sextilius, and the people knew this was indeed their king.

Wheel-Ruts

HUGH STOKER

IT was as an outrider for a firm of cattle-cake merchants that I first came to take an interest in wheel-ruts. Indeed, I had no option. In those days it was customary for my car to be spattered with the mud and muck of a thousand execrable country lanes. From mid-autumn to early spring the gravedigger's shovel and the short lengths of stropped elmwood planking that I carried about with me under the back seat were wielded in many a messy struggle with those squelchy expanses of elongated quagmire known throughout the West Country as 'unmade roads.'

Like well-ripened cheese, Vichy water, and other superficially unpleasant things, the study of wheel-ruts is an acquired taste. One has to dig, and scratch, and grovel before one can know and appreciate the romance which lies hidden in the churned-up surface of an

abnormally glutinous byway. Of course, all have made a few wheel-ruts in their time; some more than others, according to whether they live in a town or the country. Indeed, from the day they go for their very first spin in their perambulator, the inhabitants of the civilised world are potential rut-makers. Yet how many of them, I wonder, ever give a thought during their lives to the ruts they have left behind them, or realise that ruts have a pedigree over two thousand years long?

SO far as these islands are concerned, the study of wheel-ruts takes us back to the very fringe of prehistory. Those sturdy folk whom we now somewhat vaguely refer to as Ancient Britons were making the wheel solve many of their transport difficulties long before

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that simple mechanical device had become widely used on the mainland of Europe. Indeed, in this one respect the inventiveness of the Britons outpaced the Romans. Nearly everyone remembers how Boadicea's troops, supported by squadrons of swift, knife-bristling chariots, succeeded for a while in demoralising the elite of the Imperial legions.

As soon as news of these lethal vehicles trickled through to Rome, large export orders were placed with the chariot-builders carrying on business in those parts of Britain that had already been subdued. The wheel-span of the Ancient British chariot was 4 feet 8 inches, and it is an interesting fact that larva-preserved ruts corresponding with these dimensions were found comparatively recently in the streets of ruined Pompeii. Similar ones can also be seen in Britain, worn in the stone paving of the old Roman road over Blackstone Edge in the Pennines. Farther south, in Derbyshire, there is another Roman way known as 'Doctor's Gate.' It crosses the rock, peat, and claylands of Coldharbour Moor, and the thinking person may well find something significant in the fact that it measures just 4 feet 9 inches in width.

Because it has always been easier for a horse-drawn vehicle to use the ruts made by a preceding wagon than to make a set of its own, it naturally followed that the 4 feet 8 inches wheel-span of the old chariots should be retained in the design and construction of most later types of transport. In fact, if you care to run a tape-measure across the wheel-ruts of any country lane you will see for yourself that present-day wagon-builders are still using the standard breadth laid down by our woad-daubed ancestors.

THERE was an occasion once when I was called upon to assist an old carter who, whilst collecting some bags of artificial manure from a local railway-siding, had succeeded in trapping the wheels of his wagon between the rail gaps in one of those ungated clinker crossings which you find in such places. It was not a very serious matter, but the incident did serve to call my attention to the fact that the standard gauge of the British railway system was 4 feet 8½ inches. That something more than mere coincidence had given the 'Royal Scot' almost the same wheel-span as the lowliest hay-wain was too intriguing a possibility to be ignored, and the next wet

weekend was spent in rummaging about among the reference shelves of our local public library. Eventually the answer was found.

Apparently it happened like this. In the years before the Industrial Revolution the workers in coal-mines loaded the results of their labours on to ordinary farm-carts. Pumping-machinery was not very efficient in those days, and in many places the water-logged floor of the underground workings became so hopelessly cut up by wheel-ruts that eventually it was necessary to lay down a crude form of railway for the wagons, fashioned from broad parallel planks held in position by cross-beams, or sleepers. A wooden flange on the outer side of the planks served to prevent the wagons from wandering off the track. In the course of time, by a process of gradual evolution, these wooden planks were replaced by rails made of iron, and then of steel, and the guiding flanges were transferred to the wheels themselves. But the gauge of the rails remained the same, and eventually it came to be used on all the main railway systems throughout Britain, and in many other parts of the world.

Incidentally, if you ever happen to visit the west coast of Ireland you may chance upon the old form of planked railroad still serving the carts of the Connemara peat-cutters. In those out-of-the-way parts the wooden cart-track, as it is called, is a comparatively recent innovation, and in the few places where it has been installed it is regarded as a great refinement on the even more primitive method of carrying turf in wicker pannier-baskets slung over a donkey's back. Who knows, in another hundred years or so some inventor of the western boglands may even devise the steel track and flanged wheel!

ALL told, the study of wheel-ruts has led me along some very fascinating byways of knowledge; and so far as I am able to see at the time of writing there still remains plenty of intriguing ground ahead, just waiting to be explored. Certainly it is a pastime that I would recommend most strongly to anyone in search of a sideline to the more usual types of countryside observation. And to those who are interested, and who own a car, I would suggest that they take up the trail for themselves by going out to the garage and running a tape-measure across the span of their tyres. They should take the measure-

ment from the centre of each tread—or where the tread ought to be, if their tyres are anything like mine. Unless they drive a midget or a monster the chances are that they will find the reading comes extremely close to 4 feet 8 inches.

Coincidence? Tradition? Well, maybe.

But for my part I like to think the answer is simply that our modern car-designers have got themselves into a couple of ruts—the ruts that thousands of years ago some shaggy-browed Briton carved with the rickety and moderately-round wheels of the very first chariot.

Falconry

A. D. WILLIAMSON

THE art and practice of falconry is still alive in England to-day, and, despite many difficulties, the British Falconers' Club has quite a list of members of whom most are active falconers. The sport is probably the oldest in the world. Records exist showing that it was practised in China nearly three thousand years ago, and it has a very extensive literature in almost every written language.

Recently my son and I, both of us keen falconers, were invited to the moors of a friend who at present has the largest mews in Britain. There is accommodation for at least a dozen hawks, and the six thousand acres of grouse moors also hold some pheasants, partridge, snipe, and wild-duck. These moors are situated on a mountain-top between 1300 and 1600 feet above sea-level, with steep approaches on all sides. The mountain is isolated and the views from the moor are among the best in the country, with the surrounding plain spread out below in a continuous panorama.

All the roads leading to the moor are narrow, steep, and dangerous, so that motor traffic is almost non-existent, and it is only on really fine summer days that many walkers are to be seen. The game thus get some chance to breed in peace. Perhaps it is as well that this moor should be so inaccessible, for it is very dangerous in fog, which often descends even during the summer months. It has its

record of accidents, and has taken its toll of human life. However, the moor can be a true paradise, particularly while one enjoys the hospitality of my host. Apart from sport, a sojourn here is still my idea of a perfect holiday. There is no telephone, the radio is rarely switched on, letters have to be sent for from the local post-office half-an-hour's journey away. Daily papers and food arrive once a week, when sent for, so it is possible to relax mentally and enjoy the beauties of nature.

On this visit there were a variety of hawks in the mews. Five British peregrines, a Norwegian peregrine, a saker tiercel, a lanner, a Siberian passage peregrine, and a sparrowhawk. Later, another guest brought a goshawk, so there was a representative collection to deal with any game.

Most of my host's falcons become so tame here that they are allowed full liberty during the day, and spend a large part of their time sitting on the bare branches of an old beech-tree beside the shooting-box. From that vantage-point they survey the comings and goings of the guests, take short flights round the cottage, and, in fact, behave almost like homing-pigeons.

THE training of hawks and falcons to-day varies little from the time-honoured methods. Eyases, young falcons taken just

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before they are fully feathered, are hand-fed for a few days, to get them used to human presence, and are then fitted with jesses, leg-straps by which they are held, and with bells, serving later to locate them in thick covert, and put out to hack. Hacking is placing them in a small open-fronted hut which backs on to a wood in a quiet place. Here they are completely free, and are only visited once a day, when their food is tied down to boards so that they cannot carry it away. In a few days the young hawks begin to use their wings, first getting on to the roof of the hut, and after into the branches of adjacent trees. They grow rapidly, and soon get their full flying strength, but return each evening to the hut to feed and roost. About a month after they are first taken they will have grown enough to be able to kill their own game, and just before they can do that they must be taken up from hack or they would leave the district and revert to the feral state.

When taken up from hack they are put in the mews, and for three days and nights are kept in artificial light with the falconer in continual attendance. In this short time they become completely tame and can be put on block perches outside during the day, and roost at night in the mews.

At this stage they must be very carefully handled, for although they have become accustomed to their handler they must never be frightened by any sudden or unexpected noises. Strangers, dogs, and the everyday sights and sounds of modern life must be introduced gradually until the birds have lost all their fear. Then their real training begins.

Feeding-time is announced by a whistle, and they are tempted to jump from their perch to the fist to feed. The distance is increased from day to day until they come the full length of their leash. They are then flown from perch to fist on a creance, which is a long length of light cord. And when this lesson is learnt a lure is used to attract them. The lure is a padded piece of wood on which their food is attached. As soon as they will fly the full length of the creance to lure or fist without hesitation they are safe to fly loose.

The falcon is released from the fist, allowed to fly round for a minute or two, and then called down to the lure by a blast on the whistle. Flying-time is gradually increased each flight, and the birds are taught to wait on—that is, to fly round in mounting circles over the falconer's head. This is done by

showing the lure and then hiding it: the falcon keeps close to the falconer, expecting the lure to be thrown out, but when it is hidden will fly higher in an attempt to be better placed to find where it is. Proper training in waiting on is essential, as, obviously, the higher the falcon waits on, the better the field of vision and the greater the striking force at the end of a stoop. When the falcon will wait on for half-an-hour and then come straight down to the lure it is ready to be entered to game.

Passage hawks (young birds in their first year's plumage) and haggards (old birds in adult plumage) are trained in precisely the same way as just described for eyases, except that they are not put out to hack, which is only for the purpose of developing the wing muscles and flying ability under natural conditions.

The training may seem to be a long and tedious process, but, in fact, it is very rapid. Birds hatched in May are taken up in June, hacked until early July, trained in the latter part of that month, and are ready to fly grouse by the opening of the season on 12th August. Entering to game is therefore not so difficult, as the young falcon in early August will be sufficiently trained and strong enough on the wing to outfly young grouse. As the season progresses the falcon's flying ability and speed increase and in a very few weeks will outclass the older and warier grouse of the previous season.

ENTERING to game is the first actual flight of a falcon at flushed game, and does not differ from an ordinary flight except in so far as every effort is made to find birds quickly, and to see that the falcon is in the best position vis-à-vis the birds when they are about to be flushed. The object to aim at is to make the first flight as easy as possible; once falcons have made their first kill they will usually fly at any game flushed under them.

Setters are used for finding the game, the Llewellyn strain of English setter being the best; springer spaniels are used to flush the game. Dogs must be as near perfect as possible. Only the best will show the sport to perfection. Then will be seen the co-operation between falconer, dogs, and falcon which produces a full bag, for the falcon soon learns how to work with the dogs, and when to expect game to be flushed.

The routine of flying a hawk is simple, but

must be carried out with efficiency; inattention to detail, slackness, or slovenly preparation can easily lead to the loss of a valuable falcon on which much time has been spent in training. First, the lures are prepared; these—one lure for each falcon—are dressed with the wing and a portion of the breast-meat of a pigeon tied firmly on to them. Tying must be very firm, so that the falcon cannot pull the meat off the lure. Next, each falcon's food ration for the day is made up into a small parcel, and with the lures all is put into the falconer's bag.

When all is ready, the falcons are taken on the fist from the perch and hooded. The hoods are to prevent the falcons being distracted or frightened in any way until they are ready to be released from the fist. The party then goes to whatever part of the moor is to be driven for grouse. On arrival there, the securing leash and swivel are removed from the falcon's jesses, she is unhooded, and being then perched free on the fist is held out at arm's length facing into the wind. After a moment the falcon will take to flight. Rapidly she will fly up to a good height, and then will gradually increase that height while waiting on.

The setters are slipped from their leashes to range several hundred yards on either side of the keeper while the whole party moves over the moor, keeping the direction as far as possible across wind. Presently a setter winds a covey and freezes into a point, tail up and head pointing towards the grouse; a short call from the keeper to the dog makes sure that the dog is steady and not on a false point. A quick glance aloft to ensure that the falcon is in a good position and has sufficient height, and then the spaniels are urged forward to flush the grouse.

The spaniels dash forward towards the setter, pick up the scent, then literally bounce through the heather, tails, and in fact whole bodies, wagging, and with their ears flapping up and down as if they had wings attached to their heads. A scurry of the dogs, a whirr of wings, and up jumps a nice covey of grouse, churring as they go. The whole party lets out a yell to make assurance doubly sure that the falcon has seen the game, and then, far quicker than it takes to read this, the falcon selects one of the covey, half-closes her wings, and comes down with the wind thundering through her feathers in a stoop whose speed and action can only be compared to that of a dive-bomber.

The aim is perfect, and before the covey has

flown fifty yards there is a puff of feathers, and a grouse hits the ground, bounces into the air and falls again while the falcon has raked up perhaps a hundred feet vertically into the air after striking at the end of her stoop. The force of the blow delivered when striking is almost incredible, and has to be seen to be believed; the kill is instantaneous; and the blow is so strong that usually the game hits the ground with such force that where the surface is springy heather they will bounce several feet into the air.

Occasionally a falcon will, on raking up from her stoop, gain sufficient height to make a second stoop at the same covey, but generally the rest of the covey will have thrown themselves into the deep heather or bracken before the falcon can recover from the first stoop and can gain enough height.

Then the falcon will make a short turn into the wind, flatten out, and glide down to her kill, which she will start to plume. Falcons always pluck the birds they kill before they begin to eat. The dogs are called in to heel, and, while the main party keeps back, the falconer quietly approaches the falcon, and, producing either the lure or part of her rations, persuades her to come off the grouse on to the fist. The swivel and leash are attached to her jesses, the hood is put on, the game is picked up and put in the bag, and then another falcon can be put up and the dogs sent forward to find the next covey.

NATURALLY, you do not get one for the bag every flight. A covey may be flushed by mistake before the falcon has enough height, or the birds may decide to fly up wind so low to the ground that the falcon dare not stoop; snipe will often ring up so high and fast as to outfly the falcon, and the same often happens with wild-duck.

Many of the best and most spectacular flights do not result in a kill. One afternoon we had been out with only one falcon, which we had kept waiting on for over an hour, and had failed to find a single covey. There had been several false points, all probably rabbits, and we could see that the falcon was getting fed up and was likely to make off back to the cottage at any moment. In disgust we started to walk back, allowing the dogs to range about and amuse themselves. Suddenly, out of a clump of rushes which we had passed only a few moments before, up got a snipe.

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The whole party yelled and the falcon turned into a quick stoop, but she was too late and the snipe knew all the answers. While the falcon circled to gain height for another stoop, the snipe twisted and turned in tight weaving arcs, and gained height even more rapidly than the falcon. It was a superb piece of flying and natural aerobatics, better than anything any aeroplane could do. The whole party was held spellbound and gazed upwards, until, still vertically above us, first the snipe, and then the falcon, disappeared from sight. A full five minutes after, the falcon came circling down, obviously well outflown, and ready to come straight into the lure. The height the birds attained before breaking off must have been terrific.

Most of the falcons at my friend's have the homing instinct developed to a very marked degree. While on the visit I am recalling, there was a perfect example of this. One day a falcon had been put up for exercise flight, and had chased a raven off the moor down to the valley below; it was late in the afternoon, and dusk fell before she could come back. My host did not worry, but, as he was going to visit another moor for a few days, it was arranged that I should stay on by myself

at the cottage to take the falcon up the following morning. The next day thick fog covered the moor and she failed to come in. Two days later she was seen over her old hack ground, fourteen miles away in a direct line. On the third day I went back to the moor late in the evening and there was still no sign of her although the fog had lifted. On the fourth day a local farmer near the moor reported that he had seen what he thought was a falcon flying round in the valley just below the moor. On the fifth day she arrived, and I took her up without any trouble at all. She was obviously pleased to be back, though there is far more and easier game in the valley than there is on the moor, and as she was fat and had a full crop she had not been short of food. Under any other conditions the average falconer who had failed to find and take down his falcon before nightfall would have written her off as a total loss. Even if seen the next day, all hope would have been abandoned had she not been recovered within twenty-four hours. But on this moor such events are not unusual and very few hawks fail to return within a day or two.

Falconry always was the sport of kings; it is still the king of all field sports.

Coming Home from School

*Through the windy witchlight,
Grey-green and chill,
Through the darkling woodland
That skirts the bald-topped hill,
Skittering and shying
At fluttering shadows flying
As the light is dying
From the winter skies;
Past the reed-rank lily-pool,
O'er the moor and up beyond
The wind-whisked hills, until we come
Back to everyday and home.
Gone the witchlight green and chill,
Gone the eerie, leery hill,
Bald on top and hard and cold;
Here the lamps burn bright as gold,
Here it's jolly journey's end,
Where witches are just 'let's pretend'—
Though in the wood dark shadows stoop
To stir the bubbling beastly soup
Within the cauldron, squat and black,
Malevolence in each humped back!*

AILEEN E. PASSMORE.



A Housemaster's Case-Book

VIII.—Martin Probart

EVERETT BARNES

The most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is and steal out of your company.

SHAKESPEARE.

ONE of my colleagues once made the pronouncement: 'A schoolboy who steals an object, if he is lucky enough to be caught, may learn better; but the only thing learnt by a boy who steals money is not to get caught twice.' My limited experience does not warrant support of so dogmatic a statement; but certainly I can produce no evidence that my sententious colleague was wrong.

Two or three boys in my House at Melbury have been convicted of stealing money—none of whom survived in the school to the normal leaving-age. One case stands out from the others owing to its 'interesting features'—in the Sherlock Holmes sense—and its melodramatic complications.

The chief performer in this episode was a boy named Martin Probart. He was about sixteen years old at the time, fair-haired and good-looking, with a pleasant and easy manner. Most of the masters liked him well enough and he had more friends than enemies

among the boys. He managed to impose on me for about a year; then, during the House boxing competition, he gave me a revelation.

Boxing has a way of showing up character beyond all other pursuits; indeed, every schoolmaster, however little he knows of the sport or cares for it, should occupy a ringside seat when his pupils are bashing each other about. On the occasion referred to, Probart had so equal a contest with another boy that there was no telling which had won. I watched him in his corner after the last round awaiting the referee's decision—most of the spectators expected an extra round. When his opponent's flag went up there flashed over his face an expression of bewildered astonishment; then almost instantly it changed to a bland smile as he advanced to shake hands with his opponent before leaving the ring. I knew that everyone round the ring was meant to see that lightning change of expression. It was a superb piece of acting, and in it I caught my first glimpse of the essential Probart.

ONE February evening* Probart came to my study and asked if he could speak to

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me. I told him to come in and sit down. 'I'm afraid I've lost some money, sir,' he said.

'Oh? How did that happen?'

'Somebody got hold of my Post Office book and drew a pound out.'

'Have you got the book there?' I asked.

He handed it over. One pound had been withdrawn about a week before; the entry bore the stamp of Elmore, a village about three miles away. There were twenty-two shillings-odd still left in the account.

The boy told me he kept the book in the drawer of his study table; he didn't think anyone knew it was there except his study companion, whom he regarded as above suspicion—and so did I. He hadn't missed the book at all, and had only just noticed that the money had been withdrawn.

I asked Probart to leave the book with me and told him I would investigate the matter. I first interviewed his study companion—rather a stupid boy, but strongly under the influence of Probart, and, I was sure, invincibly honest. Even if he had been impelled for any reason to steal, he would certainly have chosen a simpler way of doing it. He could throw no light on the problem; he knew the book was kept in the drawer, but was not aware that it had ever been removed.

Next day, with the Head's approval, I got hold of the Sergeant at Melbury Police Station and asked him to make discreet inquiries. The Postmistress at Elmore, owner of a dark and crowded village shop, could give no description of the applicant except that he was an ordinary young gentleman wearing a raincoat, a muffler, and a Melbury cap. The withdrawal-form was signed with a passable imitation of the signature in the Savings Bank book. The Postmistress thought she might know the boy again if she saw him, and the Sergeant was eager for an identification parade; but I pointed out that the culprit might not be in my House, and to do any good we should have to parade the whole school. With the Head's support I managed to damp down the Sergeant's zeal, and even convinced him that the spectacle of 500 boys in raincoats and mufflers lined up on the Corps parade-ground for inspection by the Elmore Postmistress would not really come under the heading of 'discreet inquiries.' The Sergeant had little hope of getting other evidence of identity and reluctantly concluded that this

case must swell the country's total of undetected crimes.

All I could do was to instruct owners of Savings Bank accounts either to keep their books locked up or to give them to me to look after. Probart was the only boy who handed in a book.

A WEEK later a young scholar named Gillson came to me, looking very guilty and uncomfortable, to report that he had had £3 stolen.

'You've no business to keep so much money lying about,' I said. 'Where was it stolen from?'

'Somebody took it . . . out of my Post Office account, sir,' he managed to say in the kind of voice a very timid murderer might use in pleading guilty.

'And where was your bank-book kept, Gillson?'

'In my desk, sir.'

'It couldn't have been locked up, then?'

'No, sir,' he whispered.

It would have seemed to him contrary to the proper course of nature if an explosion hadn't followed . . .

However, something had to be done about it. The withdrawal this time had been made at Melbury Post Office two days before. Once again I set the machinery of the law in motion, and the Sergeant responded with ardour; his previous failure rankled and he saw a chance of clearing up the two cases in one glorious operation.

The Melbury Post Office clerk, knowing of the Elmore affair, was ready for anything; he could furnish an exact description of the criminal—a pale-faced boy with glasses, wearing a dark-green overcoat and a Trilby hat, as the police insist on calling it.

This time the Sergeant was really determined on an identification parade—the Post Office clerk felt positive that he could recognise the boy in a thousand. It certainly looked as though the second culprit was in my House; members of other Houses could go into my studies, but they were not allowed in the Day Room where Gillson had his desk. I made a list of boys in the House who wore glasses—pale-faced and otherwise. There were eight in all. Then I got my House Captain to find out which of these had dark-green overcoats: they would nearly all have 'Trilby' hats that term. The result of this inquiry was

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that none of the spectacled boys had green overcoats; in fact, there was only one in the House, belonging to a very red-faced boy who did not wear glasses.

When I explained this to the Sergeant, he looked depressed. 'Seems like he wasn't in your House after all, sir,' he said. 'Could we get a parade of all the pale-faced boys with glasses and green overcoats from the other Houses?'

I told him that was a matter for the Head. It seemed possible that some of the other housemasters might be touchy about their pale-faced boys and might resent the suspicions cast upon them. In the event, the Head thought it better not to pursue this line of inquiry.

But the Sergeant was not defeated; two crimes of the same kind, he assured me, are twice as easy to trace as one. He asked to see both Probart and Gillson, and interviewed them together in my presence.

After further questions designed to narrow down the times during which the books were removed, he suddenly asked me for some writing-paper. 'Now I want you young gentlemen to write your names on this paper.' He had in front of him the two Savings Bank books open at the signatures on the first page.

Both boys produced fountain-pens, but Probart returned his to his pocket and took out a pencil.

'I want you to write in ink,' said the Sergeant.

'My pen's run out,' Probart replied.

The Sergeant asked to see it, tried it on a piece of paper and handed it back. 'Seems to be working,' he said.

Probart took the pen sulkily and then asked: 'Do you mean our ordinary signatures?'

'Of course I do,' said the Sergeant. 'What else?'

Gillson wrote his signature naturally, Probart with some awkwardness.

The Sergeant compared them with the signatures in the books. 'Come, Probart,' he said, 'this is not much like your signature. Can't you do better than that?'

'I don't always write the same way, Sergeant.'

'Well, try and write your name like you did in the book.'

Probart's next attempt at his own signature was more successful.

'Now,' said the Sergeant, 'I want you both to write down each other's name on the same bit of paper.'

'Do you mean copy each other's signature, Sergeant?' asked Probart.

'No, no. Just write each other's names in your own handwriting.'

When this was accomplished the Sergeant handed each boy the other's book and said: 'Now copy that signature as well as you can.'

Gillson made a passable imitation of Probart's signature; Probart very laboriously wrote something quite unlike Gillson's.

'Now, Probart,' said the Sergeant, 'you must be able to do better than that. Have another go.'

This time Probart, looking inexpressibly bored with the whole proceeding, copied the signature so that it bore a slight resemblance to the original.

The Sergeant collected the books and the sheets of paper and said: 'I think that's all I want now, sir.'

I sent the boys away. 'Well, Sergeant?'

'There's something a bit funny here, sir. That Probart didn't at all like using his own pen. And did you notice the way he held it?'

'He seemed rather awkward about it, I must say.'

'Awkward's the word. If you ask me, he didn't quite know what I was getting at and was playing for safety. Now if you've no objection, sir, I'll send these bits of paper with the bank-books and the withdrawal-forms to our handwriting expert and see what he makes of it all. And I shouldn't wonder if his guess of what 2 and 2 makes doesn't work out like mine.'

A FEW days later the Divisional Superintendent at Granstock rang me up and made an appointment. He arrived with the Melbury Sergeant. 'Well, Mr Barnes,' he said when we were settled down, 'we've had a report from the handwriting expert. He says there is no doubt whatever that the withdrawal forms at Elmore and Melbury were both signed by the boy Martin Probart—and actually with his own fountain-pen. These young criminals have a lot to learn.'

I was prepared for this. I knew the Sergeant's intuition had led him to the same conclusion. 'Would you like to see the boy, Superintendent?'

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'If you please. We'll get him to tell the truth.'

The Superintendent started off with the customary caution. As he got into his stride I sat back and watched him with admiration. Gently, almost paternally, he tied the wretched boy in knots, so that each successive attitude—indignation, injured innocence, bravado—crumpled, and in the end nothing was left but the crude essence of Martin Probart—or so at least it seemed.

'Now, Probart, we know you haven't made a habit of forgery. Tell me what led you to do it?'

'I needed the money.' The boy was neither tearful nor defiant—just stripped bare and spiritless.

'We all need money more or less, but that doesn't make us take up forgery. There must have been some special reason.'

'I had to have £3.'

'Well, what did you want it for?'

'I had to give it to another boy. He was threatening me.'

'Threatening you? What was he going to do to you?'

'Tell people something—something I didn't want to be known.'

'In fact he was blackmailing you?'

'Yes, if you like to call it that.'

The Superintendent shot a questioning glance at me, which I took to mean—should he go on? I nodded assent.

'Will you tell us who was blackmailing you, Probart?'

'No . . . no, I can't do that.'

'You know that blackmailing is a criminal offence. The law can protect you. Won't you let us help?'

'I can't tell you who it was.'

'You needn't tell us anything you don't want people to know.'

Probart shook his head with wretched finality. And that was as far as we could get.

When the boy had gone I asked the Superintendent what he made of it. He shrugged his shoulders. 'Of course it sounds like a cock-and-bull story—but you never know; these young fellows like a bit of melodrama. It shouldn't be too difficult to get a name out of him—if there is one to get.'

I myself, who had felt certain we had got down to the Probartian core, now did not know whether we had not merely stripped off a few of the outside layers.

THE man who eventually got the name was the Head, by the simple process of telling Probart that he must leave Melbury forthwith unless he could substantiate the story of blackmail. And the name which emerged was, if one assumed that Probart's story was sheer fabrication, a masterstroke. The very sound of it opened up long vistas of hopeless investigation, because the alleged blackmailer was one of whom absolutely anything could be believed—except his spoken word.

Crance, the boy named, was rather older than Probart, and in my considered opinion one of the most undesirable boys I had ever harboured in my House. He was heavily built, loutish and indolent; no fool, but unwilling to do any work which he could terrorise a junior scholar into doing for him—at least that was my guess, though he was never convicted of this offence, or of many others which he may be assumed to have committed. He had in fact a masterly gift for keeping out of the troubles which should, in a juster world, have descended upon him. He had a good eye for a ball in flight—though he was too self-indulgent to excel at any game—and this fact, combined with too much pocket-money, secured him a certain number of friends. It had long been my earnest hope that he would do something which would justify me in getting rid of him.

I could see no hope of any profitable result if I faced Crance with a charge of blackmail. He would merely lift his eyebrows in indolent amazement and suggest as plainly as possible without actually saying it that only the feeble-minded would pay any heed to such nonsense; after which he would depart and whether the charge was true or false, beat Probart up in some manner that would not leave visible scars. The Head felt an equal reluctance to interview the boy; so we decided to hand him over to the Superintendent.

But first I was commissioned to find out from Probart, if I could, what was the dark secret which Crance had threatened to disclose. Neither the Head nor I knew of any skeletons in the Probart family. The boy's mother was a widow and obviously a commendable, if rather ineffective, little woman. The father had died when Martin was young and we knew nothing about him.

My inquiries from Probart only produced more uncertainty and fog. At first he would tell me nothing at all about the secret which Crance was supposed to have discovered.

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'But don't you understand that anything you say will be regarded as completely confidential?'

The boy just shook his head.

'Whereas if you are brought up in court for forgery and obtaining money under false pretences the whole thing may come out and get into all the papers.'

'I can't help it, sir. I mustn't tell anyone.'

'But you told Crance.'

'No, I didn't, sir. He read it in a letter in my study.'

'Well, you were telling someone in a letter.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Who was the letter to?'

'You, sir.'

This brought me up with a jerk. 'But, my dear boy, why on earth should you write me a letter instead of coming to see me?'

'It was easier in a letter, sir.'

'And if you could tell me the secret in a letter, why can't you tell me now?'

'Everything's different now, sir.'

'Was it something you've done wrong?'

'Oh, no, sir. It wasn't about me at all. It was something about my family.'

And that was all I could get out of him. Whether I had stripped off any more layers, or seen some added, I had no idea.

I SAW the Superintendent again the next day and told him the result of my researches and what little I knew about Probart's family.

'The finest collection of family skeletons in the country,' he said, 'is at Scotland Yard. It's not a common name. I'll see if they have anything on the files. Do you know the parents' Christian names or initials?'

The mother signed herself Dorothy, and I got the father's initials from the boy's entry-form in the Bursary—R. W. S. Probart.

Before he left, the Superintendent had another interview with Probart and saw Crance for the first time. He got nothing more from Probart than I had already found out, and nothing at all from Crance, who still maintained that the whole story was too preposterous for serious consideration. The Superintendent then asked if he could make one more effort to get at the truth next day. The Head agreed to this and we fixed a time.

Being stalled by a couple of schoolboys was not congenial to the police mind. The Super brought with him next day a piece of heavy artillery in the shape of Detective-Inspector

Rait from Scotland Yard. He also brought the information that a solicitor named R. W. S. Probart had been convicted of embezzling trust funds nine years before, had been sentenced to three years imprisonment, and had died in jail before the completion of his sentence.

The Head and I were both present when Probart was interviewed again. Detective-Inspector Rait did most of the questioning. His method was quite different from the Superintendent's. He was like a mechanical-drill, boring relentlessly and inexorably through to the fundamental truth; he did not hector or bully—in fact he hardly ever raised his voice above a quiet monotone; but one felt there was no protective armour which could check or deflect such penetrative power.

Probart kept his eyes steadily averted from his questioner, and wriggled in his chair as the interrogation went on. But his story, as we had heard it, remained unshaken.

'Why did you write that letter to Mr Barnes?'

'I wanted to get his advice.'

'But why did you write instead of going to see him?'

'I felt awkward about it.'

'Awkward?'

'Yes, about what was in the letter.'

'I suppose you don't think it would be wiser to tell us what was in the letter?'

Probart shook his head.

'Would you find it easier to write it down?'

Another shake of the head.

'Did you ever send the letter to Mr Barnes?'

'No.'

'Why not?' Probart merely stared at the floor and Rait repeated the question: 'Why didn't you send the letter to Mr Barnes?'

'Because Crance took it away.'

'You could have written another letter.'

No reply.

'Why didn't you write another letter?'

'It was too late to ask for advice after Crance had found out . . . what was in the letter.'

'What kind of advice did you want?'

'It wasn't exactly advice I wanted . . . the whole thing was getting on my nerves . . . I wanted to talk to someone about it.'

The Detective-Inspector then inquired about the date when Crance had first demanded money.

Probart said it was the week before last.

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'Are you quite sure it was the week before last?'

'Yes, I think so.'

'Try to get it clear in your mind. Was it the week before last?'

'Yes.'

'What day of the week?'

Probart thought for a moment and then said: 'Wednesday.'

'How can you fix the day?'

'Well, I know it was after lock-up roll on a half-holiday, and I was away at a match on Saturday, so it must have been Wednesday.'

'I see. That would be Wednesday the 26th of February. Why did you pretend someone had stolen from your Savings Bank account on the Saturday before you were blackmailed—that is, the 22nd of February?'

There was a long pause, then Probart said:

'I don't see what that's got to do with it.'

'I understand you forged Gillson's signature to get money to pay Crance.'

Probart agreed.

'And you pretended to forge your own signature so as to divert suspicion when you forged Gillson's.'

'I never said so.'

'Why then did you play that trick with your own account?'

'Well, it was a leg-pull really. I wanted to cause a bit of excitement.'

'So it was a pure coincidence that you forged someone else's signature ten days after pretending to forge your own?'

'Oh, no. The first time gave me an idea for getting money to pay Crance.'

'I see. You had to pay Crance £3?'

'Yes.'

'You had 22s. 3d. left in your own account. Why need you have taken £3 from Gillson's account?'

'I had given my bank-book to Mr Barnes to look after, and if I had asked for it back again he might have wanted to know why I needed it.'

When it was over I longed to know what the experts made of all this; but they wanted to see Crance straightaway, keeping Probart within call—but not listening in the passage.

CRANCE'S attitude still suggested supercilious amusement that four grown men should waste their time on so trifling an accusation.

'So you say there is no truth whatever in

Probart's story that you demanded money from him?'

'Absolutely none.'

'By any kind of threat?'

'Not by threats or any other way. Why should I? I've got plenty of money.'

I saw the Detective-Inspector react to this with a movement of his lips as he looked down at the table. When he spoke again I felt that the steel of the drill had become even harder. He went on to ask what appeared to be quite irrelevant questions about the place where Gillson's bank-book had been kept.

'I didn't even know he had a Savings Bank account. He's not a friend of mine.'

'You knew Probart had one.'

'Not till after he'd given out about the money being withdrawn.'

'Are you sure you didn't persuade Probart to withdraw the money from his account?'

'Yes, quite sure.' Crance was becoming slightly nettled.

'Did you tell anyone about Probart?'

'He told everyone he had lost the money.'

'No, no. I mean about his father.'

'Of course I didn't.'

'You say you were not a friend of Gillson's...' and once more he seemed to go off into irrelevances. Then after a few minutes came the unconnected question: 'You say you told no one about Probart's father?'

Crance hesitated. 'About his father?'

'Yes.'

'What about his father?'

'You must be careful, Crance. You knew what I meant just now. I ask you again: Did you tell anyone about Probart's father?'

Crance answered sullenly: 'No.'

'Did you threaten to tell anyone?'

'I certainly did not.'

'How did you know about him?' Crance was silent, and Rait went on: 'Did you read it in a letter?'

'No, I didn't.'

'How did you know?'

'Probart told me.'

'Did he tell you he had committed suicide?'

'No.'

'What did he tell you?'

'He said he died in prison.'

They had Probart back to ask one more question: 'You said that Crance discovered the fact he blackmailed you about by reading it in a letter. He says that you told him yourself. Is that true?'

'Of course it's not,' said Probart. 'I've never told a soul. And he's the very last person I should tell.'

WHEN we conferred afterwards, the Super and the Detective-Inspector were both convinced that Probart had spoken the truth and Crance had lied.

'That lad Probart,' said Rait, 'shifty-looking if you like—he hardly looked me in the face once—but he stood up to all I've got, and you can take it from me, Headmaster, his story about the blackmail is true. There are some people who look as if they're lying because they *are* lying; and others look as if they're lying because they think we think they're lying. That's Probart. He was in a bad position for a start because he *had* stolen

the money. Funny how human nature works! You've got to watch it all the time.'

I could see that the Head was impressed by this man of great experience who didn't jump to obvious but false conclusions.

'Of course, you can prosecute him,' said the Super, 'but you'll have to prosecute the blackmailing boy as well.'

'No, no,' the Head replied. 'We don't want to prosecute now we've cleared the matter up, eh, Barnes? All we want is to get rid of the pair of them at the first convenient moment.'

There I was agreed. And perhaps if I had not attended that boxing-match I should not have known with positive conviction that Probart had lied, and Crance, probably for the last time on an occasion of this kind, had spoken the truth.

English or Esperanto?

FRANK HUNTLY

A DETERMINED attempt is being made by the European Assembly to decide upon a common language for Assembly representatives of the Western European states. It is further hoped that the medium, having stood up to the smaller experiment, may also serve the needs of member states of the United Nations, and eventually become the lingua franca of all international gatherings, travel, and correspondence.

Ever since the Tower of Babel, events have shown with mounting cogency how the lack of a common tongue can frustrate joint enterprise. To-day, with peace in grave peril, a means for the direct exchange of speech is more vital than ever. Will the medium chosen be a modified form of one of the natural languages, or an artificial instrument like Esperanto?

In medieval times the problem was solved

in part by the use of Latin, which, as an ecclesiastical language and for scientific vocabularies, is still far from dead. But, as Latin faded out of general use, French became the undisputed tongue for international intercourse. To-day's permanent and frequent international assemblies, much easier travel between countries, and greatly increased facilities for scholastic exchanges are necessitating a further change, to some medium which will meet the wide and heavy demands that must be made on it. Due to the growing predominance of the English-speaking races, the trend has seemed to be towards English as the international choice.

During the War, Allied broadcasts taught scores of thousands on the Continent to speak English freely. When hostilities ended, British and American troops and administrators took the language to Germany as the official tongue,

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and the British Council was overwhelmed with requests from the liberated lands for help in learning English. At one time eight thousand people were studying this language in the evening schools of Copenhagen alone. Indeed, English seemed destined to become the second language of almost every country in the world. There were, however, far too many difficulties in the way of its ever becoming the first; and it was the recognition of this truth that brought once again into focus the need for a universal language that could be quickly and easily learned, and as easily spoken and written.

TO facilitate the process, Mr Churchill shortly after the War announced a Government decision to foster the development of Basic English as 'an auxiliary international and administrative language'; and some, but not much, progress has since been made in popularising this simplified system as a means of intercommunication. Here again there are obstacles in the way. It is argued in its favour that Basic is a relatively simple method of acquiring a knowledge of fundamental English, and that it would thus be a useful universal language for travellers and tourists. On the other hand, it would need much supplementing to make it satisfactory as a medium for diplomacy and science.

As one newspaper correspondent pointed out, Basic's 850 words are hopelessly inadequate for those functions. Conspicuous by absence from the original collection were, for example, such needfuls as the months of the year, the days of the week; words like half, fifth; such vitals as alcohols, coffee, zinc, asbestos, paradise, sport, and zebra. An indefinite number of absentees includes algebra, physics, and zoology; terms such as inch, ounce, and kilogramme; a whole host of proper names and technical terms; and a lengthy queue of miscellaneous words like polo, socialism, tribune, cuckoo.

One other defect of Basic is that it leaves unaltered the chief difficulty in the learning of English—the spelling. Only two possibilities in favour of modified English as a universal instrument of speech are conceded by Esperantists, its chief opponents. One is that it might suffice if combined with Anglic. This is a simplified form of English which is spelt more or less phonetically. It was invented by Dr Eugene Zachrisson, a Swedish professor

of English, and depends for its simplicity on fifty letters or letter combinations to represent English's five hundred ways of spelling a mere forty sounds. On this account Anglic has been adopted as the common international language of sea and commerce.

The other Esperantist concession to the possible value of Basic English as a suitable universal language is the practicability of its combination with some scheme of spelling reform that is still more conservative than Anglic. But, say the reformers, even the marriage of these two feasibles would be useful only if the individual state jealousies could be overcome. As an example of such jealousy, an English student, writing in Esperanto to a Japanese correspondent, mentioned certain advantages which English might have as an international language. The mere mention of such a suggestion so affronted the Japanese that he broke off the correspondence for good.

There could be no such prejudices against an artificial language; at any rate, such national objections as might result could be much more easily resolved. Furthermore, an artificial medium would be very badly designed if its composition were not far simpler than any natural language could ever hope to be.

IN August 1950 Esperantists presented to the United Nations a request for the encouragement of universal teaching of Esperanto. The petition was signed mainly by individuals and non-Esperanto bodies representing more than 16½ million people in all parts of the world. They included the French President, the Prime Ministers of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Holland, and Poland, over four hundred members of parliaments, and hundreds of university professors and other educationists. It is also significant that signatures of trade unionists formed a large percentage of the whole.

In the following year the 37th World Esperanto Congress was held in Oslo. It was attended by two thousand representatives drawn from some thirty different nationalities, who facily in the language of their conviction transacted business of a varied character, both in public meetings and private committees. There also exist treaties under which some countries promised to introduce Esperanto as a school subject; and, although statistics are not obtainable from these

ENGLISH OR ESPERANTO?

countries, it is known that good progress is being made in the satellite states, despite Stalin's ban on the ground that Soviet policy was to impose Russian as the common language of mankind. Hitler, too, suppressed Esperanto, avowedly because of its Jewish origin, though his real reason was probably, like Stalin's, the hope of making his own country's language the *Weltsprache*. Notwithstanding the interdict, a large number of Germans learned Esperanto, and the medium is employed by the American military headquarters for its manoeuvres in Western Europe.

Thus, one of the strongest indications of Esperanto's eventual success may well be its survival of all the troubles that have beset it since its introduction. In addition to the obstructions already mentioned, there were its direct suppression by the Russian Government in 1895 and the schism in its own ranks after the introduction, in 1905, of Ido. It is said that Esperanto now has at least a hundred times as many adherents as have Ido and all the other constructed systems combined. Further serious hindrances were the World Wars; and, in the period between, Esperanto came under suspicion, particularly in Spain and Portugal, as a means of spreading Communism. In consequence, it was forbidden in the latter country, though this ban has now been removed.

Esperantists hold fast to the view that they have but to pursue the struggle until the world, excessively blind as to its benefits, is persuaded of the immense advantages of an easy international language, and discovers that it can no longer get along without one. Then to the present three R's would be added a fourth—'Ranto. With this understanding of its value, it could, like radio, become universal among literatures in a single generation. This, it is claimed, very nearly did happen some thirty

years ago, when a committee of the League of Nations reported on it most favourably. Their report was not rejected, but simply shelved.

AS nothing simpler has yet been devised, the merits of Esperanto would seem to be only too apparent. It was invented by Dr Zamenhof in 1887. Doubtless he was influenced in its composition by the Volapük system, which had been artificially built up from English, Latin, and the Romance languages about eight years earlier by J. M. Schleyer, of Constance, Baden, and was officially sponsored by the Philological Society in London in the very year that Zamenhof launched the much simpler medium, which then completely supplanted it. Still other systems have since been constructed. There are Saussure's *Esperantido*, Peano's *Interlingua*, and Jespersen's *Novial*, and each is claimed by its votaries to be an advance on Esperanto. But their adherents seem to be few by comparison.

To the bulk of the world Esperanto is still but visionary. Given universal human rationality, the problem of a universal tongue would surely have been solved long ago. However, international man is anything but a rational animal. Odder still is the fact that Esperantists meet their heaviest opposition of all at the hands of the conservative English, though it is English—English phonetics—that presents the strongest argument for a simplified international medium. Esperanto may be a very diminutive David to join battle with such Goliaths as the languages of great empires, but it certainly has two incontestable allies on its side—simplicity and internationality, drawn as it is from several languages. And these, in the end, may prove decisive.

The Pelican

*The pelican is half a bird
And half a portmanteau, I've heard.
He keeps his dinner in his bill
Until he wants to have his fill,
Then like a conjurer with a hat
He gets his living out of that.
He never worries, what a wag—
He knows he has it in the bag!*

H. R. DAFFIN.



Devil-Fish

MUGUR

WE were anchored off the Ratnagiri coast, south of Bombay. There were six of the battered LCMs of the Royal Indian Navy and one ML. We had just been doing a landing-exercise with a battalion of the King's Regiment and one of the Punjab Regiment. The troops had been loaded back on to the ship that took them, the old *Llanstephan Castle*, I think she was, and we were making our way back to Bombay. We had anchored in the morning in the broad shallow bay, two craft lying to each anchor, for we were always short of anchors in the Landing Craft Wing.

Bill's boat was moored with mine and we were sitting over a cup of tea on the comfortable steel quarter-deck of my boat. Bill, a big Canadian, was looking idly over the bay, when he stiffened suddenly. 'Sharks!' he said, pointing inshore.

Four blunt fins were cruising slowly between us and the palm-fringed shoreline. Backward and forward they cruised in perfect formation. It was as if there were two pairs of sharks, for sometimes the four fins were in line abreast, sometimes one pair followed the other. But they kept in pairs.

'Better warn Davey,' I said, reaching for my Aldis lamp. Davey's boat was on the

beach with its ramp down. His brown-skinned crew were splashing round the stern, trying to free a rope which had worked round one screw during the exercise. I flashed the lamp at Davey's boat, but everybody was too busy. No one looked up.

Bill and I began to worry. If those sharks happened to work in much closer to the shore they would be in among Davey's crew in no time.

Bill had a dugout canoe in his boat which he had picked up during an operation in Burmese waters and had kept jealously ever since. It was some twenty feet in length, with a beam of about a foot, and was carved out of a single tree-trunk. It was a tricky craft to paddle, until you got the way of it. The body had to balance continually, or over you went. Many a ducking had the canoe given the members of the flotilla, officers and ratings alike, before they learned its use. Now Bill and I clambered cautiously into the narrow hull and paddled shorewards.

As we headed for Davey's beached boat, the sharks turned towards us. I felt distinctly uneasy as I saw those four fins swing round and cut through the gentle ripples in our direction. Bill gave an eager grin and dug his paddle deeper as we surged towards a meeting.

'If they're any size,' he said over his shoulder, 'we'll have a try at them.'

Game-fishing was his hobby, and whenever the flotilla was on the move Bill could be seen on his quarter-deck with a heavy sea-fishing rod, trolling as we went. I don't remember him ever catching anything that way. Perhaps the sound of the engines frightened the fish. But in port he had more luck, and he had taken several sizeable shark as well as barracuda and other smaller fry.

The fins had almost reached us, and Bill headed the boat between the first pair. Since he was at the bows and I was right in the stern, he was the first to see the fish properly. I saw him suddenly tauten and start to swing round. 'Look out!' he called.

The fins were now abreast of the dugout's bows. All at once the boat shuddered and the bows lifted. For a moment the whole boat was poised perilously half out of the water, as if we had hit a sandbank. It dropped abruptly and we had to fight furiously for our balance. But not so furiously that I did not have time for a glance over the side. The two fins had sunk beneath the surface, but they were only two or three feet down. And I could see that they were joined. A huge flat body was swimming beneath the boat. I could see quite clearly a great, gaping mouth, pale-skinned against the black of the back, with two armlike feelers at either side which waved constantly. It was a giant ray, a manta ray or devil-fish. It was its back which had lifted the canoe.

The second pair of fins was swimming our way, but fortunately submerged before reaching us. Bill started to paddle again. But we did not head for the shore. We went back to our moored craft. Bill could hardly wait to scramble aboard and start to assemble his fishing-gear. The two devil-fish were still swimming unconcernedly round the bay, as if they had not just given me the biggest fright of my life.

THE giant rays, like sharks, mate by contact, and for their mating they visit shallow, warm water. These two were no doubt engaged in mating when we saw them. The rays may reach a breadth between fin-tips of twenty-four feet and a weight of two tons. In outline they are not unlike a modern swept-back-wing jet-fighter with wing-tips

raised vertically. Their swimming, too, is like flying, for the 'wings' rise and fall gently, driving the great fish along as a bird is driven in the air. The tips of the wings seem to be used to give direction, though they do not always remain erect.

The 'arms' at the side of the mouth are used to scoop fish into the yard-wide mouth, and they wave constantly, dragging in any living thing within their reach. While the rays are not man-eaters, a man who found himself directly in the way of that gaping maw and in the grip of those waving arms would have little chance of survival.

And now Bill proposed to catch one on his rod. As soon as his gear was ready, he started to clamber back into the canoe.

'You're not going after them in that thing?' I gasped.

'Why not?' he answered. 'Don't they fish for tunny in dinghies?'

'Dinghies don't upset if you look at them sideways,' I said. 'If you hook one of those things, you'll be in the water before you know where you are.'

I managed to persuade him to fish from his own LCM. And not wishing to miss the fun, I went with him. I left my own boat in charge of my Punjabi coxswain, Umar Bux, and we set off in Bill's boat.

Hooking the ray was ridiculously easy. Bill took the LCM slowly round in front of the four cruising fins and his lure, a big spoon equipped with heavy triangle hooks, was soon dragging through the water in front of the leading ray. Probably it never even saw the lure. The waving arms would just waft it into its broad flat mouth.

The tip of Bill's rod suddenly dipped and he yanked back on it. For a moment nothing happened. Then the shallow water of the bay burst wide open and the ray seemed to float into the air. It was a fearsome thing to see that massive body poised in the air like a great vampire-bat. It was fifty yards astern of us, and yet it seemed to be right above the boat, brooding malevolently over the crew. Everyone shrank back automatically.

Crack! The broad flat body hitting the water gave a report like a four-point-seven going over. Spray scattered wide. That was the last we saw of the devil-fish that afternoon.

As soon as the fish submerged, Bill's line started to run out wildly, the heavy reel whining like a buzz-saw. The ray was heading for the open sea. Snapped orders to the

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coxswain sent the LCM hurrying after it. But the LCM's maximum speed was about ten knots. The ray seemed capable of twenty. Bill's line kept on running out.

Suddenly the reel stopped whining. For a moment Bill strained at the rod, his powerful body crouched on the steel deck. The line was two-hundred-pound breaking-strain—and it broke. It was lucky for Bill it did, for the look of determination on his face said plainly that, whatever happened, he wasn't letting go.

Bill was gloomy as we headed back to the bay. I was not. Two tons of fish would have been a lot to handle.

WHEN the giant ray swam out to sea, taking all Bill's line with it, I was sure we had seen the last of the beast—and I for one was not sorry. The idea of bringing that mountain of fish-flesh into one of the landing-craft did not appeal to me in the least.

But Bill was like a caged tiger, pacing up and down and muttering to himself through his beard—for at that time we all wore beards. He had set his heart on catching that fish, and the contemptuous way it had ripped off his line despite the drag of the heavy reel had really irked him.

Then the next day Umar Bux came to me, his brown face shining with excitement. 'The big fish has returned,' he said. He pointed across the bay. The two pairs of fins were cruising along, half-a-mile away.

'Be quiet,' I ordered, 'or Bill Sahib will hear.'

It was too late. Bill had heard—and seen. His powerful, sun-tanned frame, bare to the waist, was already quivering with excitement. He darted for the dugout.

'Hey, you're not going after them again!' I shouted. He did not answer, but waved gaily as he paddled away.

I was relieved to see he was not making for the devil-fish, but for the LCM, which was fitted out as a workshop. This craft, the envy of all the other flotillas, had been furnished with a lathe and a blacksmith's forge. The means used to secure the equipment might not have secured the full blessing of authority, but it was certainly invaluable to us, and in the long run authority benefited, since our craft were kept operational longer than those of other flotillas. And in the Wing we were not unduly fond of authority, anyhow.

Bill was in the workshop boat for close on two hours. When he came back, he had three shining steel rods in his canoe. He brandished them as he passed under my stern. 'Now maybe we'll get some place,' he shouted.

They were harpoons. Barbed heads had been forged out of some scrap steel-plate and bolted to steel-rod shafts, which had been fitted with a ring-bolt and socket at the end.

As soon as Bill clambered aboard his boat he started to splice some half-inch line into the ring-bolts. He ordered his coxswain to get his engines started and prepare to cast off. Before they left, I sprang across. I had just realised I had an interest in the chase. That coil of half-inch line came from my boat. Besides, I wanted to see what happened.

IT almost seemed that the devil-fish had guessed Bill's plan. As the LCM stole up on them, they slowly sank and dropped back, so that they were lying under the boat. Perhaps they found the shadow it cast pleasant. It was possible at this time to get an accurate idea of their size. The LCM was fifteen feet in beam. The wing-tips of the devil-fish could be seen sticking out on either side. That made it at least twenty feet between tips.

Bill stood on the side-deck at the bows, harpoon in hand, waiting for a chance to throw. But the fish refused to come near enough the surface for a throw. Bill had been prepared for this. The socket on the heel of the harpoon was big enough to take the butt end of a boathook, whose shaft was eight feet long. With the three feet of the steel shaft on top of that, he had a length of eleven feet. But the side-deck, itself about two feet in width, was three feet above water-level.

The ray seemed to be swimming at about eight feet. Bill thrust the harpoon down towards it. Lying on the side-deck and using all his long reach to thrust the shaft downwards, he was just able to touch the fish's back with the harpoon point. But the tough skin could not be penetrated without more force, and the water absorbed all Bill's strength in keeping the harpoon in place. I was relieved myself, for, if he had been able to lodge the point, the line would have been running out over his body. It would have been a miracle if it had not caught him somewhere. Then he would have been jerked into the water. With the devil-fish at

one end of the line and the LCM at the other, Bill would have been cut in two.

WHEN Bill found he could not reach the fish from the side-deck, he had another idea. A few orders to the crew sent the bow ramp slowly downwards, until the end was just touching the water. Now Bill had an ideal platform from which to throw his harpoon. The ramp was ten feet wide by about the same length. The hinges that held it to the boat were about two feet above water-level, so that it was on a slight outward slant. It was raised and lowered by steel-wire cables from the outer end to a winch in the engine-room, which was controlled by a lever in the cockpit.

Bill was standing on the outward edge of the ramp and the fish was directly beneath him, with the second one keeping station a few yards behind. I joined Bill on the ramp. It was strange to look down on that monster from only a few feet away. The constant flap of its arms, just in front of its mouth, could be seen clearly. So could the pilot-fish. These small striped fish are always seen in company with larger fish, such as rays and sharks. They swim always a few inches in front of the gaping jaws. It used to be believed that when danger threatened they took refuge within the jaws of the fish they piloted and that they led it to sources of food. Now it is agreed that they travel in such dangerous company because the bigger fish set up a back-current which drives them along and makes their own feeding easier. Support for this is found in the fact that sometimes a small school of pilot-fish may be seen at the bows of a slow-moving ship.

We noticed that the devil-fish was swimming so that its mouth was just on the line of the shadow cast by the boat. This gave Bill an idea. He ordered the coxswain to swing the boat slowly, until the sun was directly astern. This threw the shadow out in front of us.

The plan worked. The devil-fish was still in the shadow, but it was no longer under the boat. As if it sensed that there was no longer anything directly overhead, it began to rise again. Soon its fins were cutting the water once more, on either side and just ahead of the ramp.

Bill tensed himself. The long shaft of the harpoon was poised in his right hand. He looked like a classical statue of a javelin-

thrower, his bronzed body gleaming in the sun, his brown beard jutting out. The devil-fish's back was only a few inches beneath the surface.

Bill threw. The harpoon flashed out, the line snaking behind it. For a moment the shaft of the boathook stuck up in the air, quivering a little. It seemed to take a full second for the fish to feel the iron strike home. But when it felt, it felt. I could see its wings drive suddenly downwards in one powerful beat that threw it straight up out of the water. Its stumpy tail-end hit the ramp and knocked it up a good two feet. And that ramp must have weighed close on two tons. Then the fish was in the air again, as it had been the day before, hovering for a second like a dreadful bat. When it hit the water a wave rushed up the ramp and into the boat.

Then it was off for parts unknown, and the line began to sing out. On Bill's shouted orders the coxswain slammed his engines full ahead and started to raise the ramp. We got up speed quickly enough, but the ramp lifted only a few inches before it stuck. We found later that that blow from the devil-fish's stern had twisted the steel of the ramp. It was a workshop job to mend it.

We had no time to worry about that then. The line was still running out fast over the bollard Bill had rigged up. He had arranged a block of wood on a hinge so that it could be brought down on the line and used as a brake. Bill applied the brake. Immediately the line began to smoke with the friction of its speed. A rating started to throw water on it to check the burning and Bill put more pressure on.

For a few minutes the best Bill could do was to check the speed of the rope's running out. He did not want to put too much pressure on and drag the harpoon from its hold. From the force he had put into the throw, I did not think that likely.

GRADUALLY the LCM caught up on the fish and for the first time we were able to get some line in. A foot at a time it came, and we inched steadily closer to the great ray. As if it sensed our approach, the fish broke surface suddenly in three skittering leaps, like a stone skimmed over the water. It was about forty yards ahead and we could see the harpoon clearly, jutting out from the broad smooth back, just behind the gills, which in these fish are on the upper surface.

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But the exertion tired it. After the leaps, we were able to gain more line, heaving in quickly as the fish seemed to idle along. As soon as it felt the pull of the harpoon, however, the ray set off once more and the hardly-gained line was grudgingly paid out once more.

All this time we had been heading out to sea. Once clear of the shelter of the headlands at either side of the bay, we ran into a crisp head-sea. With our ramp down and dipping into every wave, we were slowed down. The line was thrumming like a fiddle-string. But the fish was tiring fast. Soon the tip of the harpoon was hissing through the water just in front of the ramp. We could see the broad black back just beneath us. Now we had to make the kill.

Bill was poised at the end of the ramp with another harpoon affixed to his spare boathook shaft. Half-a-dozen of the ratings had gathered beside him and were pointing and gasping at the size of the fish. Most of them were Punjabis and had never even heard of these ocean giants before. Bill struck downwards. And at that moment sport nearly became tragedy. With the pain of the blow, the fish gained a moment's fresh energy. It heaved itself upward, knocking the ramp high, and then dived. As it dived, it swung round so that the line jerked straight across the ramp, sweeping the ratings into the water.

The LCM sailed straight over them, and for a second I had a horrible vision of the

propellers churning them into small pieces. But the coxswain was quick-witted. As he saw his crew flung into the water, he cut his engines. A moment later the men bobbed up astern, for the boat's way had carried it over their heads.

But the fish was still on, still towing the boat. I heaved a lifebuoy towards the men and yelled at Bill to cut the line. A strangled grunt answered me. When I swung round, I saw that Bill was pinned against the ramp supports by the line, which had swung back again as the fish circled. The line was running across his chest, scoring it and drawing blood. His knife lay on the deck beyond his reach.

It was only a matter of a second or so before I was at his side. Even as I slashed at the line, he gasped: 'No, don't cut it . . .' But he was too late. The rope parted, and he was free. While the coxswain swung the boat back to pick up his crew I bandaged Bill's chest as best I could.

Without the fish, we swung round to rejoin the flotilla. We had not gone above two cables' length when something bobbing in the water drew the coxswain's eye. It was the devil-fish. Still and dead it lay on the surface, with the two harpoons still sticking in its back. That last wild leap had been its final effort. Slowly we towed it to the beach. It measured twenty-one feet nine inches between wing-tips and as near as we could guess it weighed two tons—two tons of trouble.

The Whistle-Man

*The whistle-man is playing
A little tune, and sweet,
All the time he's straying
Up and down the street;
The cars and trams go rushing,
The people crowd along,
But no one dreams of hushing
To hear his tiny song.*

*It's only when the roaring
Of traffic dwindles down
The silver notes go soaring
About the cars of town;
And for a magic minute,
The city hears a strain,
As sweet as that of linnets
Along a country lane.*

ELIZABETH FLEMING.

Twice-Told Tales

L.—Social Boredom

[From *Chambers's Journal* of February 1855]

SOCIETY in England is an intensely respectable thing; but it is also very dull. When we reflect, indeed, on the little satisfaction one generally has in recollection of any of those assemblages called dinner or evening parties, it might be wondered why people have such meetings at all. We suppose they feel that they must meet somehow, and meet they do accordingly; but, from some deficiency in the national genius, they have not been able as yet to make these meetings really enjoyable. All acknowledge the leaden pressure of a decorous dullness which pervades more or less each party they attend, but all alike seem helpless to effect an improvement. We go on suffering under this social boredom, and possibly shall do while the English idea of respectability is what it is.

Even in that comparatively simple affair, the morning-call, it is marvellous how much stupidity besets us. People go to other people's houses, nine times out of ten hoping they may not be at home; or if admitted, sailing up into the drawing-room, just for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour—merely to go through a ceremony, not to converse with their friends. Indeed, friendly intercourse among acquaintances is the last thing we think of in our England. We must be very, very intimate before we relax from the glacial dignity we think it due to ourselves to maintain. We are afraid of being friendly; we are afraid of being natural. We partly fear our neighbours; partly we are uncertain of ourselves. Pride makes us reserved on the one hand, dreading lest we should be thought too forward; and pride, of the complexion of arrogance, keeps us back on the other, dreading lest the blessing of our speech should fall on ground socially unconsecrated. For we are so careful of the respectability of all with whom we hold even the most casual intercourse! That story of

the Oxford man who refused to jump into the river to save a drowning commoner, on the plea that he had never been introduced to him, has still much truth in it. We are, undoubtedly, more creatures of society than of humanity; we are more conventional than natural; more formal than real; and this it is which pervades our whole social system like a blight—this absurd fear of ourselves, which, indeed, is the very reverse of true pride, mixed in with that baneful arrogance which makes us shrink from our fellowmen as either too high, or too low, for our notice. True pride and real dignity equalise all men by right of their common humanity: our social pride is only a make-believe after all!

We are too expensive and too stiff in all our social life. Our dress, our furniture, the conditions of our society, all are buckramed and bedizened out of all shape of nature and all power of attainment by people of middling fortunes. We will not speak to those we know perfectly well by sight, name, and reputation without a formal introduction; and we speak to those to whom we have had a formal introduction as if our minds were stiffened into mere dictionary columns; we see our friends only under circumstances of relative pomp, and parade, and expense, and eschew as mean all simplicity and modesty. Well, all this is very unwise. If we could once unstrap that buckram-belt round our hearts when in the world, and once see the beauty of naturalness in manner, and of simplicity in life, we would never go back to the old ways of reserve and luxury, but would laugh when we wanted to laugh, and speak to any of our same circle we wished to speak to, without fear of compromise to ourselves or of repulse from them; and we would see our friends without parade, and enjoy the pleasure of social intercourse without fuss, expense, or pomp.



The Grisly Shepherd

ALEXANDER HAZELTON

THE shires of Peebles, Selkirk, and Dumfries march in upon each other at Loch Skene, a strange, remote, forbidding tarn locked high up in the Moffat hills. Queer things happen there, as you will hear, with only Beattison's old milk pony, now retired and roaming free up yonder on the White Coomb, likely to see them happen. But I had never thought the place a sinister locality till Erchie Rutherford started telling me some of his ploys as a school attendance-officer.

Give him his due, Erchie would not willingly have named wee Bobbie Pearson as his principal in the story of the grisly shepherd, but there it was—it just slipped out. As a writing man, I have no such scruples.

It appears that the Authority—a name Erchie always put in capital letters—the Education Authority, that is, had set Erchie on the track of the boy for persistent non-attendance at school. Erchie interviewed the father, tactfully. The Authority, he pointed out, had wonderful powers of compulsion in a case like this.

'Awa and dry yer een, Rutherford,' returned the father truculently. 'Is't ocht tae dae wi' me if they canna learn ma laddie his tables? You and yer Authority—a docken for the lot o' them! Noo, if they had gi'en him

exemption at the lambin' when they were askit . . .'

Erchie appealed to the mother. She, at least, must see reason, surely. But no. 'Oot o' here, ye auld snoop,' cried she, 'or I'll set the dugs on ye!'

Erchie turned tail and went to seek out the boy himself, but he was nowhere to be found. A school chum volunteered that when wee Bobbie was minded to jouk the school he was often seen making up towards the Coomb in the early morning and as often coming down the braeside after dark. It seemed he spent the whole day up there—fishing, doubtless.

ERCHIE, conscientious and with a ready sympathy for suffering humanity, sensed that only an unhappy child would want to lose himself in the hills day after day with little or no food to sustain him. So one day he packed himself a good lunch, with a ration of ginger-beer and chocolate, and set off to track down the runaway. Even a diminutive twelve-year-old, thought Erchie, needs more than a school leave piece for a ploy like this.

It was nearing midday when Erchie finally

THE GRISLY SHEPHERD

came upon wee Bobbie sitting on a boulder by the edge of the loch. The boy didn't hear him. He was staring down into the water and, for all the time Erchie took to come down upon him from the hillside, never moved.

'So this is where ye get tae?' said Erchie quietly as he came up. 'Man, Bobbie, I thocht a lad like yersel' would hae minded yer fishin'-rod. Ye'll no' catch troot jist lookin' at them.'

At the sound of Erchie's voice Bobbie nearly fell into the water. Recovering, he greeted the representative of the Authority with more grace than his elders had—indeed, with a certain familiarity and affection. 'It's you, Schoolie, is it?' he said, adding by way of explanation: 'It isnae troot I'm seekin', onyway—see?'

'Then whit is it?'

'It's yon auld wifie the grey herd pitched into the watter, syne.'

It was Erchie's turn to be surprised. He sat down hastily. 'Save us!' he cried. 'Losh, Bobbie man, whit's that ye say?'

'Huh,' said the boy, 'ye widnae could see the auld besom, onyway, gin she did come up. But I saw her—and him, tae. Haein' a brawlike row when I keeked in at the windae. Then the door opened and oot he cam wi' her in a bag. Cut her throat maist like. Then he gaed doon to the watterside and sheughed her in.'

'Guid sakes!' breathed Erchie, almost in a moan. 'This is fair awfu'. I dinna get the hang o' this ava. Whit auld wifie are ye talkin' aboot, laddie, whit herd, and whit windae here aboot—where there's no a hoose for miles? Here, hae a bittie chocolate and start frae the start. Ye're gettin' me as daft's yersel!'

WITH a show of patience, and his mouth full, Bobbie explained. 'Ye maun ken, Schoolie, when it's gettin' tae be dark oot here by the lochside a' sorts o' things happen that ye widna see—nor yon lang drink o' a dominie either, him that's aye beltin' me for no seein' things!'

'Whitna sort o' things?'

'It wis ae nicht I wis here I spotted a hoose doon by the dyke there wi' a licht in the windae. I gaed ower and, by criveins, wis there no' a racket comin' oot! A man wis roarin' blue murder and a wumman wis

roarin' back at him. I wis fair feart, but I keekit in, and there wis this auld herd in shepherd-tartan breeks and plaid and a wumman wi' a bunnet on goin' at it hammer and tongs.'

'Whaur did ye say it wis—this hoose o' yours?' asked Erchie.

'There!' said the boy, pointing.

'But ye ken fine there's nae hoose there!'

'But there wis. I'm tellin' ye I seen it.'

'Oh weel, a' richt then,' said Erchie, deciding to humour the boy, but puzzled all the same. 'Get on wi' the comedy, ye wee prevaricator.'

'Nane o' yer big words, Schoolie, or ye've had it.'

'Richt ye are, son. If ye say ye saw a hoose, a hoose ye saw. Whit then?'

'Syne the door burst open and the grey herd cam oot wi' the bag. I jinked in at the bield o' the dyke and watched him pitch the auld wifie into the loch!'

'So ye did!' said Erchie.

'Aye, but the auld deevil cotch me sneakin' awa and hauled me intae the hoose wi' him and sneekit the door. But he wisnae half bad—he gied me bannocks and a tumbler o' milk. A' the time he kept glowerin' at me and chuggin' at his whiskers, wonderin' if he widnae be better to pit me in a bag as weel. I wis feart, Schoolie!'

'And weel ye micht be, Bobbie lad.'

'Syne we heard a fitfa' ootbye, and the auld man louped up wi' a screech, roarin': "The limmer that she is, she's gotten oot!" And he got a hand on an auld hammer-lockit shotgun that wis standin' in the neuk and started rampagin' up and doon frae the yin windae tae the ither, whiles I gaed and hid in the ingle. Syne a face glowered in at us frae the windae, a' een and tousy hair.'

By this time, on his own admission, Erchie, was speechless. He just sat there, choking on a bit chocolate, and fearful for his state of mind.

'Quick as lichtnin',' went on Bobbie, warming to his subject, 'the auld geezer let fly wi' his gun. Ye should've seen it, Schoolie! Bang! The windae gless got blawn tae smithereens and where the face hid been peerin' through there wis nocht but a big black hole.'

'And wis it the auld wifie?' asked Erchie, finding his voice.

'Naw,' said Bobbie in disgust. 'She's still in the loch. I telt ye that already.'

'Wha wis't, then—the face, I mean?'

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'Bet ye a pound ye'd never guess,' said Bobbie. 'It wis Beattison's auld white milk powny. Me and the auld man fun' it lyin' deid as cauld mutton, as sure as my name's Bobbie Pearson!'

AS I say, Erchie let slip the boy's name in the telling.

'Havers, Erchie,' I cried, 'isn't that Wull Pearson's son—Pearson o' the West Fen? But is yon laddie no clean gyte?'

'A bit on the backward side, I grant ye,' admitted Erchie. 'Never learned to read or write or reckon, and aye skippin' his schoolin', as I've been tellin' ye. But gyte—never fear! I warrant he's a fell keen imagination.'

'Surely,' I conceded doubtfully. 'Indeed, he must have, to spin a yarn like that, or else he's heard some story by the bothy fire and aired it for your benefit. You're not trying to tell me, for instance, that Beattison's milk pony has really been shot?'

'That I am not,' Erchie assured me soberly.

'But I did gang on errand back up to the loch next day to see if— Weel, I jist minded something I'd heard lang back, and I ettled to prove it to mysel' there wis naething in it.'

'And you saw the pony—quite the thing?' I asked.

'I saw the pony—quite the thing, as ye say.'

'Well, then?'

'Weel, then, I saw something else. I gaed ower the bit o' grun whaur Bobbie wid hae the cottage standin', and, richt enough, there were the foondations, clear as clear. Ye'll remember he said the herd wis dressed in a plaid o' shepherd-tartan? That wis the fashion hereabouts a hundred-odd years syne. Man, I wis sae taen on, I went straucht to the factor's office at Selkirk and got him to look up his records. Richt enough, there wis a cottage there aince, but the Yarrow fowk burnt it doon aifter the tenant wis hanged in Edinburgh for droonin' his wife in the loch.'

Wayward Weather

*I knew a girl at Tilbury,
Where Thames flows out to sea,
But she preferred another lad—
Love's glass dropped low for me.*

*In Plymouth, and down Shannon way,
At Dover, and on Tyne,
I've had some sweetheart weather, but
It never has held fine.*

*I met a maid near Malin Head,
And she had auburn hair.
Love's weather would change suddenly,
From storm, then rain, to fair.*

*I cannot flirt with Faroe sheep,
Bleak Rockall's cold and grey,
While Lundy Isle's a dreary place
For sailormen to stay.*

*I'll hie me to the Hebrides.
A lass in Stornoway
Once promised me kind weather, if
My heart would cease to stray.*

VIVIAN HENDERSON.

Science at Your Service

STRIPPING EMULSION-PAINTS

A COMPANY that has for many years specialised in producing chemical paint-strippers has now added to its range of products by bringing out a stripping liquid for plastic-pigment emulsion-paints and oil-bound water-paints. Like other paint-strippers of this kind, the liquid is first brushed on to the surface, and when the surface has been penetrated the paint film can be easily removed. The stripper cannot harm brushes and is, in fact, an excellent brush-cleaner; it is composed of a non-acid, non-alkaline substance. Repainting can be commenced without delay and without washing down. For private use, half-pint, pint, and quarter-gallon units are available; for commercial use, there are larger packs.

LIQUID-GAS APPLIANCES

A bottle for holding several hours' supply of butane or propane gas, with attachments that are fitted to the neck so that the bottle becomes the stand and holder of either a blowlamp-head or a burner-head for various purposes, seems likely to widen the use and serviceability of cylinder-provided gas. The manufacturers are at the same time arranging that distributors will have a simple filling-machine so that the bottles can be quickly refilled. The filling is, in any case, controlled by a valve in the container that is claimed to ensure correct filling. With the blowlamp-head attachment the air-intake point is placed well behind the tip of the flame, thus minimising the risk of blowing out in windy conditions. The fuel capacity of the bottle is sufficient for five hours' blowlamp operation and seven hours' burner-head heating. The burner-head can be converted for cooking use, lighting use, or melting-pot use by other attachments that are fitted to the head itself. This is not so much a new appliance as a new series or system of interchangeable devices, all based upon the main unit, the specially-constructed butane or propane gas bottle. The prices are not high and the cost of refilling is also reasonable.

A SYNTHETIC ANTIBIOTIC

Hitherto all the antibiotics have been natural substances produced as by-products in the growth of micro-organisms. Their large-scale manufacture has involved factories and chemical plant for the controlled and stimulated fermentation of the parent organisms, but fundamentally the processes have been natural. Perhaps the most noted of the antibiotics to follow penicillin was aureomycin, which has a very wide range of antibacterial effectiveness, yet can be easily assimilated by the body without serious side-effects. One of the notable advances in the chemistry of antibiotics was the elucidation of the precise molecular structure of this natural antibiotic. When this became known, it was possible to plan experiments that would bring about small changes in the molecular structure. If this or that atom in the complex molecule was replaced by an atom of another element, would the resultant substance still have antibacterial properties, and, if so, would they be more powerful or weaker?

Through this approach, the first synthetic antibiotic substance has been produced—achromycin, or, by its more precisely chemical name, tetracycline. This new substance is aureomycin with a single chlorine atom in its molecule replaced by a hydrogen atom. Its range of antibacterial action is as wide as that of aureomycin. It has more stability in the body and a lower tendency to produce gastrointestinal side-effects than any other antibiotic so far discovered. It is more soluble than aureomycin and, as a result, greater amounts can be more quickly passed into the blood-stream. With some antibiotics, disease bacteria develop resistance; but not, so far as observed, with achromycin. In short, this change in structure, by applying a chemical process to a natural antibiotic, seems to have led to one that is in many respects superior and yet in no important way inferior.

Discovered and developed first in the United States, the new antibiotic is now available to hospitals in the National Health Service. It will no doubt be used in treating

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a wide range of illnesses, perhaps most notably pneumonia and meningitis. It is perhaps slightly an exaggeration to call it a synthetic antibiotic, for it has not been synthesised from the simplest of initial substances; still, it is unique in being partially synthesised, an entirely new chemical substance produced by chemically amending a natural relative.

A PORTABLE CONTINUOUS FIRE

An addition to the already wide variety of continuous-burning fires on the market would call for little comment were it not for the fact that this particular model has been produced by the original manufacturers of this type of appliance. Unlike this company's established models, however, the new one is portable, requiring neither bolting down nor cementing; it is simply slid into the fire-opening and is self-sealing.

A PIPE DEFROSTER

Defreezing water-pipes by applying localised heat can be a dubious operation. The point of blockage may not always be found quickly, or some residual point of blockage may prove lengthily resistant. Powerful heat applied at one point in a pipeline may also be damaging. A new defrosting appliance is based upon the principle of heating the whole length of the pipe with electricity. The appliance is housed in a portable steel case with carrying-handles. It contains a transformer for connection to 200-250 volt A.C. mains supply; the transformer will provide a current of between 180 and 250 amps, depending upon the length of the pipe, the voltage being brought down to a low and safe figure. Connection to the pipe is made by copper cables. It is said that the electric defroster can be used without risk by non-technical people. It is intended for sale to corporations, councils, waterworks, plumbers, farmers, industrial organisations, etc., for use on 1-inch pipes up to a length of 100 feet in any building or location where there is considerable liability to frozen pipes. Most burst pipes suffer their fate because the water trapped between two already frozen points, or between one such point and a closed tap, subsequently freezes; the expansion of ice-formation creates a pressure that the pipe walls cannot stand. The speedy use of this pipe-warming appliance will free blockages of this kind wherever they may be and thus remove the main cause of burst pipes.

GARDEN PAVING

A new range of outdoor paving, suitable for garden-paths, house-surrounds, terraces, and verandahs, has been recently introduced. The composite stone is said to have a non-slip surface and to be resistant to frost or bad-weather effects. The cost per square yard is remarkably reasonable, especially when it is considered that five colours are available, each in twelve different unit sizes. The smaller units, 1 by 1 foot and 1 by $\frac{1}{2}$ foot, are $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick; all larger units, and one small unit, which is 9 by 9 inches, are 2 inches thick. The five colours are salmon pink, light brick, stone, grey green, and sand grey. Garden edging to match is also available, in 3-foot-long lengths, 7 inches high, and 2 inches thick; the edging has a rounded top.

A WASHING-MACHINE ACCESSORY

A rubber-tubing appliance designed for both inlet and outlet operation has two major uses in the modern home. It eases the task of filling washing-machines with water and of emptying them. It can also be very useful when a boiler and associated radiator water-system has to be emptied. The bore of the tubing is wide to allow a speedy flow of water. The outlet-nozzle is designed to obviate splashing. The inlet end is designed as a universal-tap connection and will fit any type of tap between the diameters of $\frac{1}{2}$ and 2 inches. The length of tubing for the standard model is $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards, but other lengths may be specially ordered. The tubing is made in three colours—pale green, pink, or ivory.

HELICOPTER FACTS

The use of helicopters for city-to-city air travel is a much-discussed subject to-day, and some information given by the Belgian airline company which in 1953 inaugurated the world's first international helicopter services throws interesting light upon public reaction. In a little less than one year's operation nearly 18,000 passengers had been carried. Survey questioning revealed that 15 per cent of the passengers had never flown in any kind of aircraft before. The most frequently given reason for taking a helicopter flight was 'for amusement or pleasure'; next in order of frequency came 'rapidity of connection between cities'; the third major reason was 'low-flying countryside sight-seeing.' But novelty alone was not given as a particularly influential motive.

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

A MULTI-SPANNER

A company specialising in handtool manufacture has introduced a unique spanner which can fit ten different sizes of nuts. The entire length of the spanner is used for the placement of the inset cavities or sections that receive and grip the nut heads. Plated handgrips that can be moved along either side of the spanner cover the inset cavities not in use and so enable the non-operative end of the spanner to be held comfortably. The spanner is machined in high tensile steel. There are three different colour-coded models; though each of these can fit its ten different nut sizes, they cover respectively the Whitworth and B.S.F., the metric, and the S.A.E. standards.

AN IRON FOR TRAVELLERS

The small electric-iron for travellers is well enough known to-day, but the modern version generally requires an electric-point for operation. Recently an earlier type of travelling-iron has been revived, a small non-electric model. It is heated by the chemical solid fuel that is often used for heating picnic-kettles, etc.—metaldehyde. Below the handle there is an inset tray for placing a small portion of a bar of this fuel; by standing the iron upside down and burning the fuel in this tray, the iron becomes hot enough for efficient use. The iron weighs only twelve ounces and an initial fuel-supply is provided. The price is moderate.

LIGHT ON SEWING

A lamp which can be fitted to a sewing-machine to give illumination centred on the point of working is an interesting new appliance. The lamp is fitted with a normal lead for connection with a lighting-point; the top of the lamp-holder has a horizontal arm which attaches the holder to the side of the sewing-machine above the needle position. This arm is a multi-angle fitting, enabling the lamp to be moved through a variety of angles. The appliance is supplied with a bulb at a very reasonable price. It can, of course, be used for a number of other localised lighting tasks besides the cited example of a sewing-machine.

A STRAINER FOR PAINT-POTS

A new device on the market should obviate one of the incidental problems of painting. It is a metal gauze filter or strainer for inserting into paint-pots. It has a circular top flange that rests on the open top of the tin, and the strainer then passes through the paint, reaching almost to the bottom of the tin, creating a gauze-walled pocket into which the brush can be inserted. Thus, paint that has skinned over in the tin need merely be stirred before use, and the subsequent insertion of the strainer ensures that only evenly-mixed paint free from lumps comes into contact with the brush. Strainers to fit either pint or quart tins are available at remarkably moderate prices.

PEGBOARDS

To a good many readers the word 'peg-board' may be comparatively new, at any rate in its contemporary meaning. Peg-board is regularly hole-perforated hard-board, first introduced for acoustic purposes. However, the innumerable number of holes, placed as they are in regular pattern, has given pegboard a totally different use as display backing for shops. Various goods can be hung on pegboard from clips inserted in the holes; at the same time, the background of the pegboard has an attractive appearance, especially when it is given a pastel-shaded plastics surface or painted with plastic emulsion-paint. In the past year and a half the use of pegboard in British shops has become widely popular.

Now pegboard panels are being made available for home use by one hardboard manufacturer. They can be used for hanging smaller kitchen equipment or in a workshop for hanging tools. The panels are in two sizes, 24 by 24 inches or 30 by 18 inches. Holes are spaced at $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch intervals. The boards are finished in white, cream, or light blue, each colour having a glossy and washable surface. Accessories provided are twelve stainless steel hanging-hooks, and four chromium-headed screws with distance pieces for fixing the panel. The price seems remarkably reasonable.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

The Care of Room Plants

MANY are the plants which are given as presents for Christmas and the New Year, but few seem to exist after the middle of March. For one reason or another these plants get bad treatment, partly because of ignorance and partly, it must be said, owing to modern heating. I have been asked to give readers a few hints and tips about the care of room plants, and these notes are specially designed for those who have no greenhouse at all.

Let it be said, right from the start, that it is not easy to keep certain plants going year after year in the room of a house. There is often insufficient light, or the temperature is not kept constant, or, of course, there are problems of feeding and potting on. Do not, therefore, keep cinerarias or most of the primulas. The only one of the latter that will live on in a house is *Primula obconica*. The red-berried solanums may last for two years, but they are a bit of a gamble, and I have known azaleas go on for five or six years. It is, of course, the palms and ferns which last better than any other type of plants, and fortunately to-day there are many of these available, together with many other types of evergreens and succulents, which make a good show.

The ferns need plenty of water in the summer, but very little in the winter. If they do need repotting, try and do this late this month in the John Innes potting compost. Actually, it is a good thing to put ferns nearer the window in the winter so that they can get the light that is available, and towards the centre of the room in the summer when there is really bright sunshine.

Let us take it that you were given an azalea for the New Year and that it has been a wonderful show. The flowers, perhaps, are now starting to fade and the new growths are being made. Syringe the plant over from time to time with tepid water. This will encourage the production of the new shoots, and only water the plant when it gets really dry. Repot, say in March, using the John Innes compost, which any local nurserymen will be glad to supply you with, and in June take the plant out of doors and plunge it into the soil or in

ashes, where it can grow happily on its own. There it can be fed once a fortnight with Liquinure, which can be diluted for the purpose. At the end of September the plant will come indoors again.

Perhaps your favourite plant is a cyclamen. This is a plant that needs keeping quite dry when the leaves have fallen, and, in fact, the pot can be laid on its side out of doors in the summer. The repotting will be done in July, but the plant will not be brought into the house until late September. It will need only a moderate amount of water until the plant is really growing well. If you have one of those little cherry trees, as some people call them, cut the shoots back by half when the red fruits start to shrivel. Then, when new shoots begin to be produced, repot and once again put the plant out of doors in the summer in a sheltered place.

Now for a few general hints. Never allow the plants to stand in a draught, for they hate it. Do not leave them, either, in the direct line of a fire, because they will resent it. More plants are ruined by over-watering than by under-watering, so do not stand a plant in a saucer of water and so cause the base of the roots to die. Every now and then wash or syringe the foliage, as dust so often blocks up the breathing-pores. If you make this a regular Saturday morning job, it will be a great help.

The reason why plants so frequently succeed in a kitchen rather than in the living-room is that there is often a kettle on the hob, with the result that the air is never really dry. Do not forget to cut off the yellow leaves, the broken stems, and the dead flowers regularly. Make this a Saturday morning job, too, if you wish. It is not always advisable to pot plants up into larger pots. They can always be potted back into pots of the same size if some of the fleshy part of the root is cut away and as much of the old soil as possible is removed.

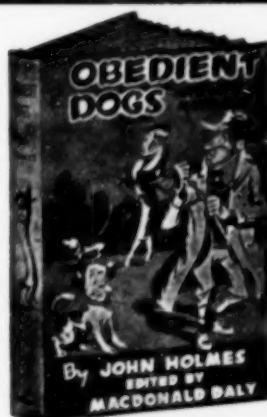
I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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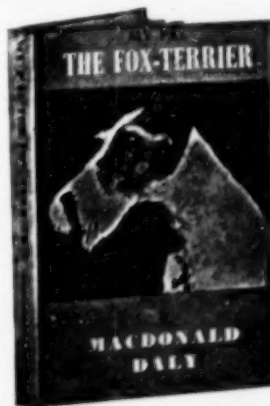
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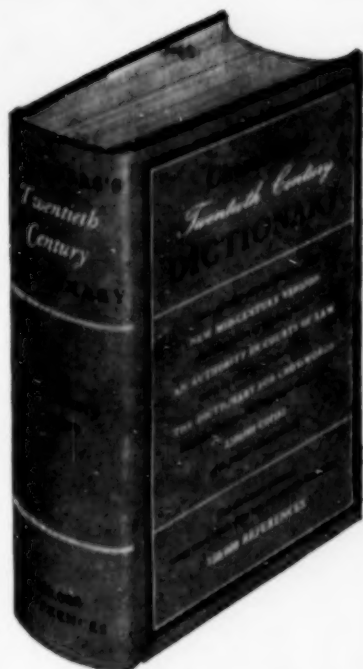
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